150TH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

FAIRBURY FAIR

by

Dale C. Maley

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150th Anniversary of Fairbury Fair

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Edition Number

This is edition Number Two, published in May 2026.

Foreword

It is remarkable that any volunteer civic organization can endure for 150 years. The Fairbury Fair has done so because of generations of loyal volunteers who have planned and carried out the fair year after year. Over its long history, more than 1,000 Fairbury-area citizens have given their time and energy to keep the fair alive.

The Fairbury Fair has also adapted to sweeping changes in technology and daily life. It began in an era when travel was by horse and train, and it is remarkable to imagine crowds of 7,000 to 10,000 people coming to Fairbury in those early years by wagon and railroad car. The fair has survived World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and the COVID pandemic, emerging each time with its traditions intact.

With the continued dedication of future volunteers, the spirit of the Fairbury Fair will endure for many years to come and will continue to create lasting memories for Fairbury-area families. This book is offered in the hope that it will help inform future generations about the rich history of the Fairbury Fair and the hundreds of volunteers whose efforts have made it successful.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks go to the Fairbury Fair Board for their help on this project.

Thanks go to Diane Pawlowski, Fairbury Echoes Museum Board member, for her help in finding historical information in the archives of the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

Many thanks go to the Fairbury Echoes Museum for allowing access and photographing the old paper bound books of the Fairbury Blade dating back to 1877.

Thanks go to Judith Wells for proofreading the manuscript.

Many thanks go to Kent Casson. After the Blade newspaper went out of business in 2021, Kent has continued to write about local events including the Fairbury fair and publishes his articles on FairburyNews.net. Many of his articles were used to help write this book.

Many thanks go to Kay Shiflett for providing information for this book and also proofreading the book.

Thanks also go to James B. Munz for providing photos of the fairgrounds buildings burning in 1936.

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Many thanks go to Gunner Sullivan for providing some important images. Many thanks to Bill Fugate, long-time Fair Secretary, for reviewing the manuscript and offering improvement suggestions.

Thanks from the Fairbury American Legion John Joda Post

John Joda Post #54
The American Legion
P.O. Box 84 • Fairbury, IL 61739

The Fairbury American Legion John Joda Post, who has owned, operated and overseen the Fairbury Fair Corporation since 1936, would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank everyone who has in any way volunteered, sponsored and contributed to the past, present and future of the Fairbury Fair, as well as everyone who comes out and supports the Fair and Dale C. Maley for compiling this book.

We would like to give a special mention and thank you to our office help, who handle the business during the Fair, and our numerous department superintendents and their helpers, who help plan and oversee all our many individual department activities.

We would especially like to recognize and to express our deepest gratitude to the approximately 140 special men and women who have donated from 1 to up to 42 years of dedicated service as Directors on the Fairbury Fair Board since the Post took over the Fair in 1936 (please see the list from 1950-2026 in chapter 20 of this book). The Director's job involves all operation and management, with Post oversight, of the Fair with at least once a month planning and operational meetings as well as setting up, operating and tearing down the Fair. We estimate they spend 150 to 200 hours a year for the Fair.

Lastly, we would like to thank all our visitors and participants who support the Fair. Your enthusiasm and enjoyment of the Fair is why we have the Fair! Without all of you this Fair would not have survived 150 years! We are looking forward to and hoping to see it reach 200 plus!

CHAPTER 1

Book Design

The Blade Newspaper

While the Blade was still being published, each year paper copies of the newspapers were bound into large books, typically organized by year. These paper copies were also scanned and converted to microfilm rolls. The Blade and the Dominy Library had microfilm readers to review the old Blades.

The Dominy Library initiated and completed a project to digitize the old rolls of microfilm and then make the old newspapers available to anyone from their website.

When the Blade quit publication in 2021, the Blade generously donated the old printed Blade books to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. These books are in the archives of the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Unfortunately, about 15 of the old books were lost over the years before they were donated to the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

When the Blades were microfilmed, most of the images did not result in good quality images. When the microfilm was digitized, the images were also of poor quality. Fortunately, images can be retrieved by taking a digital photo of the article in the old paper Blade books.

For this book, each year the printed books are available, articles about the Fairbury Fair were reviewed and images photographed.

Auto Racing

Auto racing has been a part of the Fairbury Fair since the early 1900s. It is not the intent of this book to give a detailed history of auto racing at the Fairbury Fair. In 2015, James A. Whittington wrote his book titled ***Fairbury American Legion Speedway: 1922 Indy Type Big Cars to Present Day Super Late Models and All In Between.*** Mr. Whittington's 224 page book is an excellent review of the history of auto racing at the Fairbury Fair.

Google Books

Google Books was also an invaluable source for old books with information about this story. NOTE: You must utilize the Google Book option to find these books. The regular Google search feature does not readily identify these old publications.

Citations

If possible, references and dates will be noted for all materials used in this book. In the event no date is available, that fact will be noted.

Sanborn Maps

The Sanborn Insurance Company periodically made maps of many small towns in Central Illinois. Sanborn maps still exist for Pontiac in the years of 1888, 1892, 1897, 1903, 1910, and 1924. Copies of these old maps are available for free from several different websites. The fairgrounds are shown on the 1911 and 1924 Sanborn Maps.

Newspaper Stories

All newspaper stories cited in this book will be presented in the original wording of the article. If the copy of the article had adequate quality, it may be shown as an image. If the article is of poor visual quality, it will be transcribed into text.

Pantagraph Negatives

Starting a few years ago, the Pantagraph released their old photo negatives to the McLean County Museum of History. The museum had the negatives scanned and then posted on a website where anyone can access them for free. Negatives that were used in this book will be referred to as “Pantagraph negatives.”

Archive. Org

Most of the rare documents discovered in researching this book have been uploaded to Archive. Org. Hopefully, this website will survive for many years in the future, and future researchers can easily find this material. A PDF copy of this book will also be eventually uploaded to Archive. Org.

Fair Anniversary Dates

Over 150 years, the Fairbury Fair has confused newspaper reporters about which year represents which anniversary. The table below illustrates the relationship between the year the fair was held and what number of fair it was.

Fair Number	Year
1	1876
25	1900
50	1925
100	1975
150	2025

The first fair was in 1876, so 1875 is the base year for numbering. To calculate the fair number, subtract 1875 from the year (e.g. 1975 – 1875 = 100th fair).

Any discrepancies found in newspaper reports on anniversaries were left as they were originally reported.

Differences in Spelling and Grammar over 150 Years of the Fairbury Fair

Spelling, grammar, and word usage in the 1800s and early 1900s often differ from today's accepted norms. To preserve historical accuracy, the original language from old newspaper articles has been reproduced exactly, including any outdated or unusual spellings.

Book Font

This book is written in Times New Roman with a 12 point font size. This relatively large font size makes all parts of the book easy to read.

Transcripts of newspaper articles will be indented in the main body of the book.

AI (Artificial Intelligence)

AI programs were used to help write this book. An AI program was used to help transcribe the many Blade and Pantagraph articles from images into text. Other AI programs were used to enhance old and faded photographs from newspapers. AI programs were also used to help create historic images. Some of the AI programs used were Perplexity, ChatGPT, and Fotor.com.

End-of-Chapter Blank Pages

Modern book design convention places new chapters on the right-hand page. Because chapter lengths do not always end evenly, this can result in a blank page at the end of a chapter. In this book, some of these blank pages have been used to include photographs from the 1990s, providing a glimpse of the fair in more recent years.

Chronological Chapters

This book is designed in chronological order to make it easier to follow the story of the Fairbury Fair.

CHAPTER 2

1876 to 1877

Livingston County Fair History

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana. In the 1860 U.S. Census, Fairbury only had a population of 269. Over the next two decades, Fairbury experienced rapid population growth, rising from 1,493 in 1870 to 2,140 in 1880.

As Fairbury entered the 1870s, agriculture was the primary industry in this area. Farmers needed horses to farm, so several firms were established to sell them to farmers. John Virgin (1838-1900) set up a firm that imported Percheron draft horses from France and sold them to Fairbury area farmers. John Virgin also designed and built his unique "Horse Palace" just north of where the Walton Center is today. The Horse Palace building was half a block north of the intersection of Third and Locust Streets, on the west side of Third Street.

The first fairs in Livingston County began about 1850 and were held on the courthouse square. The primary force in organizing these early fairs was Mr. Samuel Ladd. But only a few articles were exhibited, and at the close of the day's entertainment, a hat was passed to raise money to defray expenses. These primitive fairs generally went by the name of "rope fairs" because a rope was stretched around the articles being exhibited.

A permanent organization was created in early 1856. A Constitution was developed and approved for the Livingston County Agricultural Society. The first Livingston County Fair was held in the Fall of 1856, in the courthouse square in Pontiac. No admission fee was charged, and a minimal list of premiums was offered.

In 1865, the Livingston County Agricultural Society purchased the old fairgrounds, south of the Vermilion River in Pontiac, which they furnished with buildings, stalls, and a sound half-mile track, and which were occupied until 1878.

In 1872, the Illinois Legislature passed a law changing the State Agricultural Society to the State Agricultural Board, and gave it certain privileges. The same act provided that any County Agricultural Society forming an organization in compliance with this law would be entitled to $100 each season a fair was held.

To comply with the new State law, the Livingston County Agricultural Society changed its name to the Livingston County Agricultural Board.

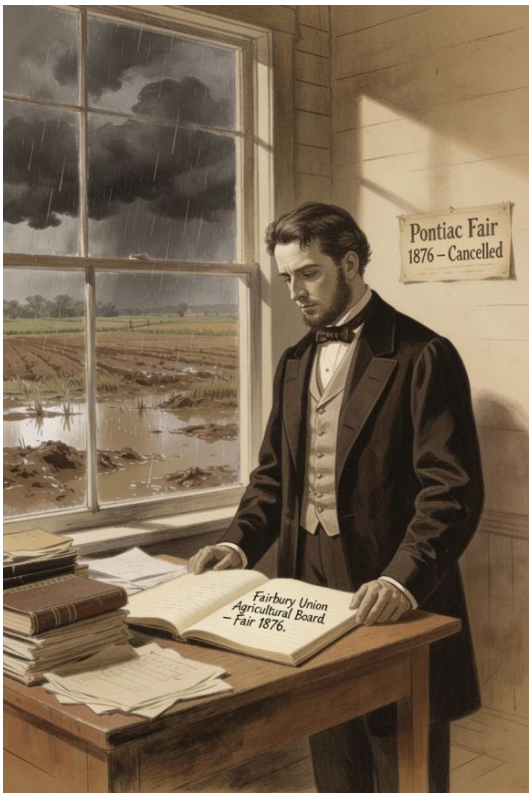
Fairbury Fair Starts in 1876

There were likely two drivers behind Fairbury starting the Fairbury Fair in 1876. The first driver was the 1872 Illinois State Law, which promoted the formation of fairs and offered to contribute $100 to any fair that held one each season. This state funding would be equivalent to $2,664 in today's dollars.

John Virgin was the second primary driver in establishing the Fairbury Fair. He was nationally known for his Percheron breeding business. John Virgin could promote his horse business by making entries in the Fairbury Fair and other Fairs in the Midwest.

1876 was a terrible year for Livingston County farmers due to excessive rainfall and flooding. The Livingston County Agricultural Board recounted that "owing to the unfortunate condition of the county from the long continual rains, and consequent failure of crops, there was no fair held by this Society in 1876."

The men organizing the Fairbury Fair decided to go ahead and hold the first Fairbury Fair in 1876, even though the Pontiac folks canceled their fair.



John Virgin decided to go ahead with the 1st Fairbury Fair in 1876 even though Pontiac had canceled their fair due to a terrible wet year for farming.

Illinois Department of Agriculture

Unfortunately, we have no copies of the Fairbury Blade available before 1877. Fortunately, the Illinois Department of Agriculture published annual reports that included information about fairs. The 1877 book, which reported on the 1876 Fair, covers the first year of the Fairbury Fair.

> A number of our enterprising citizens, with a view to the better promotion and encouragement of agricultural and mechanical pursuits, formed an association called the "Fairbury Union Agricultural Board," and, notwithstanding the depressing influence consequent from the hard times; the partial failure of the crops in this vicinity for the past two years; the almost entire failure of a crop this year; and the unpropitious weather during the holding of this our First Annual Fair, the same met with a success far beyond the expectations of the most sanguine.
>
> Our association is a joint stock company, with a capital of $6,000, divided into shares of $25 each, and composed of members residing in Fairbury and neighboring towns and adjoining country; and to prevent a few monopolizing the control of the association, there is a clause in our constitution prohibiting any one person from holding over $500 worth of stock, and each member allowed only one vote.
>
> Our grounds lie just outside the corporate limits of Fairbury, with sidewalks leading from the main street, and contain 21 acres, with a floral hall built in the most modern and improved style; 200 stalls for horses and cattle; 50 pens for sheep and hogs, well floored and covered; and an amphitheatre with a capacity of seating 800 persons; and one of the finest half mile tracks in Central Illinois; also, a number of wells, which furnish an abundant supply of water for stock and other purposes.
>
> Our show of horses was good; prominent among which were several Normans, imported by Messrs. Virgin and Brown—Mr. Virgin being a resident of this place, and also president of our society; and Mr. Brown a resident of France.
>
> A noticeable feature in our cattle show was several Short-Horn herds, owned by Messrs. Corbin, McDonald, and Weider, of this county. The exhibition of swine was quite extensive; the Berkshires and Poland Chinas being the principal breeds.
>
> The agricultural products on exhibition were as fine as could be seen at any fair. Floral Hall presented a fine display of numerous articles. Our citizens manifested quite an interest in getting the enterprise started, and notwithstanding the continued rainy weather during the time of holding the Fair, the attendance was good and the Fair every way a success, paying all our premiums in cash, without any pro rata reductions, and with favorable season in 1877, and propitious weather during time of holding Fair next fall, I can see nothing to hinder making it a grand success, financially and otherwise.
>
> SMITH OLNEY, Secretary Fairbury Union Agricultural Board.

2nd Annual Fairbury Fair in 1877

The 1877 Blade reported this fair was held on September 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. The newspaper reported that over 7,000 people attended the fair on Thursday. The Blade reported there were refreshment stands, swings, ball boards, and shooting galleries near floral hall. The Star Windmill Company erected a windmill and then pumped the water to a fountain near the floral hall.

Many local businesses exhibited their wares at booths at the fair. The Watseka band provided music during this fair.

Illinois Department of Agriculture Report on the 1877 Fairbury Fair

> Our Second Annual Fair met with a success beyond the expectations of the most sanguine, and was pronounced by all to have been the most successful Fair ever held in the county.
>
> And although we considered our fair last year a grand success, this year the exhibition was larger and better, our entries amounting to over 1700, being 350 more than last year. Our premiums offered being nearly $1200 more and our premiums paid nearly $600 more, all of which were paid in cash in full.
>
> The weather was all that could have been asked for, having rained the day before the Fair opened, laid the dust nicely, then cleared away, and remained clear during the Fair.
>
> The attendance was good, and on Thursday, our best day, was variously estimated at from 6,000 to 10,000 persons. The show of cattle was better than generally seen at County Fairs, there being nine herds on the grounds (5 thoroughbred and 4 grade).
>
> Noticeable among the thoroughbred herds were the Short Horn herds of Abner Strawn, of Ottawa, and H. Croft and Son, of Wenona, they taking the ribbons. The show of horses was large, there being over 300 entries, among which were some fine specimens of Normans, Clydesdale, and thoroughbreds.
>
> The show of sheep, hogs and poultry was good. The display of farm products was fine. The display in the ladies department in Floral Hall, was large and fine, and said by many who visited the State Fair, to have been superior to the same department there, which we think, reflects great credit upon the handiwork and enterprise of the ladies in this vicinity.
>
> We have made considerable improvements on our grounds this year, having set out quite a number of trees, built a number of new stalls and pens and numerous other improvements which make a fair ground attractive, which we expect to continue improving from year to year, as occasion may require.
>
> The financial condition of our society is probably as good as any of its age in the State, the amount due on stock with amount in treasury, would reduce the debt to less than $750 with grounds and improvements that have cost $8,141, or $2,141 more than the capital stock.

The success of the past two years has given the Fairbury Fair a splendid reputation, and placed it among the established fairs of the State, thereby giving it a start that I can see nothing to hinder making the third annual fair more successful than either of the two past.

ED. ANNABLE, Secretary

CHAPTER 3

1878 to 1890

1878 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

The 3rd Fairbury Fair was held on September 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. This fair offered $4,000 in total premiums which would be equivalent to $135,840 in today's dollars.

One of the main events at this fair was a speech given by Schuyler Colfax. He was an American politician and journalist who served as the 17th vice president of the United States under Ulysses S. Grant from 1869 to 1873. Before that, he was a leading Republican congressman from Indiana, a Radical Republican opponent of slavery, and Speaker of the House who helped secure passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery.

Lutyen's Cornet Band provided this music for this fair. This band also escorted Mr. Colfax from the Fairbury House hotel to the Fairgrounds.

Another main attraction was Captain Joe H. Scibird's Zouave Cadets. This group of young Fairbury boys wore very decorative uniforms and performed military drills for the audience.

The Blade reported a crowd over 7,000 people on Wednesday. A baseball tournament was held and the championship game was between Fairbury and Forrest. Unfortunately, this championship game was not completed because of a disputed umpire call in the 4th inning.

1879 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

The Blade reported that over 7,000 people attended the Fair on Thursday. The main event of this fair was a speech given by Illinois Governor Shelby Moore Cullom. He was the 18th governor of Illinois, serving from 1877 to 1883, after a career as a lawyer, state legislator, and U.S. congressman. He later represented Illinois in the U.S. Senate for three decades, becoming a prominent Republican leader on national issues in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Another big speech was given by Senator Daniel Wolsey Vorhees. He was an American lawyer and Democratic politician from Indiana who served multiple terms in the U.S. House of Representatives and then as a U.S. senator from 1877 to 1897. Known as the **"Tall Sycamore of the Wabash,"** he was a powerful orator, a Copperhead critic of the Civil War, and later a leading advocate of silver coinage who played a key role in the development of the Library of Congress.

There were 46 exhibit booths at this fair and music was provided by the Lexington Band.

1880 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. This fair struggled with cold weather and the Thursday attendance was about 6,000 people. Music was provided by the Fairbury Brass Band, which had just been formed three months before the Fair.

1881 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The Blade noted that readers could attend many different fairs that season including Watseka, August 16, Hoopeston, August 22, Paxton, August 30, Fairbury, September 5, and Wenona, September 19.

That year, R. C. Straight was President and H. L. Bruce was Secretary. That fair had issues with a drought and very hot weather. After the fair, the Premium list published in the Blade was so long that it consumed about three-quarters of a full page.

1883 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

The 1882 Blade book is missing. The 1883 Blade book reported that fair started on September 5, 1883. There were over 1,600 entries at the fair with many local businesses exhibiting in the floral hall. The ground were very dusty that year.

1884 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

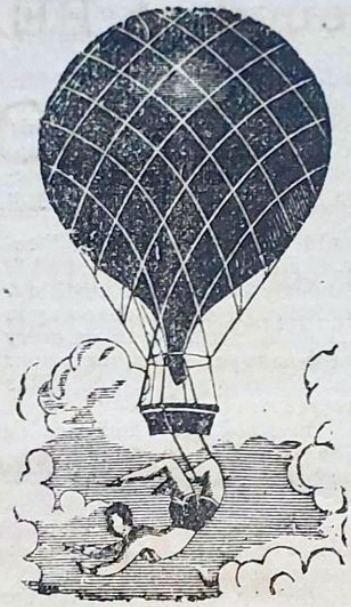
This fair was held on September 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. The ad for the fair in the Blade noted "Competition Open to the World." That year there were $4,500 in premiums paid. All school children under 18 were admitted free on Wednesday. This became a tradition in subsequent Fairbury Fairs.

R. C. Straight was President and T. S. O. McDowell was Secretary. The big attraction that year was the French & Co's circus.

CIRCUS.

FAIRBURY,

Wednes. Sept. 10.



FRENCH & CO'S

Circus and Free Menagerie !

Honest Words:

We have no three-ring would-be circus and a white-washed elephant to deceive the people and bring them into town to see a parade of old empty cages and a field of circus canvasses, but we have a rare collection of Animals, Birds, etc., etc.,

Which we Exhibit Free

On the Circus Grounds.

—We have also some of the—

Best Riders, Leapers, Tumblers

and people in every branch of the Circus Profession who will give you the Best One-Ring Circus in America.

Free ! Don't Miss It !

Our outside Show FREE EVERY DAY—rain or shine—for all on circus grounds.

1885 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

This fair was held on September 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25. The big attraction that year was ascensions by a hot air balloon.

Balloon Ascensions.

The Officers of the Fairbury Union Agricultural Board have secured

PROFS. GOMES and JEWELL,

Of Springfield, who will make hot-air Balloon Ascensions on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday Afternoons of the Fair-

In the 1880s, public balloon ascensions were a hugely popular form of entertainment at fairs and celebrations, drawing large crowds eager to see daring aeronauts rise hundreds or thousands of feet into the sky. These events combined spectacle and novelty, often featuring parachute drops or stunt performances, and were widely advertised as headline attractions at local fairs like the one held in Fairbury in 1885.

1887 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

The 1886 Blade bound book is missing. The 1887 book reported this fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The big attraction that year was balloon ascensions.

The crowd was disappointed when the first schedule ascension was canceled because the wind was too strong. On Thursday, the balloon ascended to 1,000 feet in altitude, but then the wind blew it north and landed in front of Perlee's store on Main Street.

For that fair, R. C. Straight was President and C. E. Carter was Secretary. The Blade reported the children patronized the candy and peanut stands, as well as riding on the summer toboggan sleds.

During that fair, newspaper reporters at the fair included the Eureka Journal, the Pontiac Free Trader & Observer, the Pontiac Gazette, the Chatsworth Plaindealer, the Pantagraph, Prairie Farmer magazine, and the Blade.

The Thursday crowd was estimated to be over 8,000 people.

1889 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

The 1888 Blade bound book is missing. The 1889 book reported this fair was held on September 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The big attraction for that fair were balloon ascensions each day with parachute drops. For that fair, R. C. Straight was President and E. W. Wilson was Secretary.

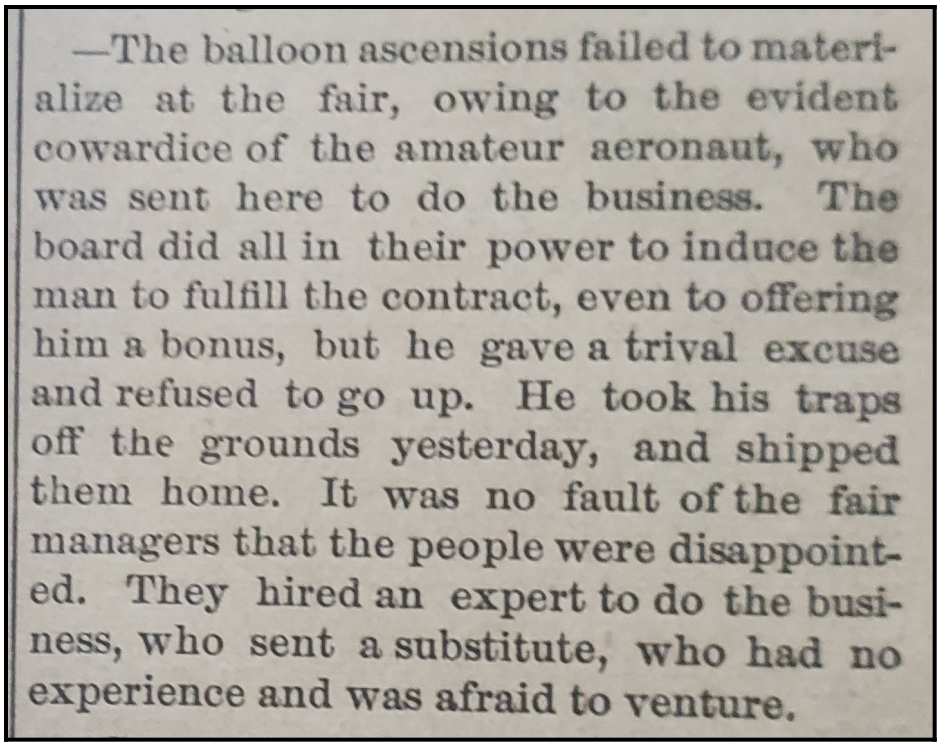
1890 Blade Report on the Fairbury Fair

This fair was held on September 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. A new feature at this fair was an oration contest with the candidates being Livingston County residents between ages 16 and 24. The winner of the oration contest received a two year scholarship to Wheaton, Illinois, College.

R. C. Straight was President and T. S. O. McDowell was the Secretary.

Professor Moore of Sturgis, Michigan, was contracted to perform three balloon ascensions with parachute drops. There was a big thunderstorm on Wednesday night during this fair.

Unfortunately, the planned balloon ascensions did not go well.



—The balloon ascensions failed to materialize at the fair, owing to the evident cowardice of the amateur aeronaut, who was sent here to do the business. The board did all in their power to induce the man to fulfill the contract, even to offering him a bonus, but he gave a trival excuse and refused to go up. He took his traps off the grounds yesterday, and shipped them home. It was no fault of the fair managers that the people were disappointed. They hired an expert to do the business, who sent a substitute, who had no experience and was afraid to venture.

Fortunately, Spencer's Military Band became the most popular attraction on the fairgrounds.

> Spencer's military band and orchestra of fifteen pieces is one of the greatest attractions on the fairgrounds. Mr. Len Wiley, whose reputation as a cornetist extends all over central Illinois, arrived yesterday morning and is playing with the band. The stand is besieged all day long by an interested crowd of people, who drink in the sweet harmony, with an enjoyment that finds expression in applause at the close of every number. Visitors at the Fairbury fair were never before regailed with such music.

1890 Pine Street Lawsuit

This very interesting lawsuit contains a lot of historical information about the Fairbury Fair. The following story was written by the author in early 2026.

> It has now been 150 years since the first Fairbury Fair was held in 1876. It isn't easy to research the early years of the Fairbury Fair because copies of the Fairbury Blade newspaper are not available until the early 1880s.
>
> In the 1890s, the Fairbury Fair (then called the Fairbury Union Agricultural Board) became involved with a lawsuit regarding what is now Pine Street. This lawsuit ended up being resolved by the Illinois Supreme Court in 1897 (Fairbury Union Agricultural Board v. Holly). The details of this lawsuit include rare information about the formation of the Fairbury Fair in 1876.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. When the new railroad was approaching what is now Fairbury, Caleb Patton wanted the new railroad to go through his farm so he could make a lot of money by converting farmland to city building lots. Mr. Patton offered railroad engineer Octave Chanute half of these new building lots if Mr. Chanute agreed to run the railroad through his farm. Octave Chanute accepted his offer. Today, the railroad, now called the TP&W, still owns lots in Fairbury.

Caleb L. Patton also owned a farm adjoining the town of Fairbury on the south side of town. In February, 1864, he platted an addition to "the town on the north part of his farm. The streets in this addition running north and south were numbered First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh, commencing on the west side of the addition.

There was no street or alley connecting the south ends of these streets, but each one ended at the north line of the remaining farm lands. After laying out the addition he said that he would lay an alley through there, and he measured off twenty feet in width for that purpose the entire length of the addition and set stakes to mark the south line.

The addition was then in meadow included with the farm, and so remained until the fall of 1864, when he sold the farm to Americus L. Pogue, and told Pogue that he had left the strip out there for a road or street. He said to Pogue, “If I make this deal I have promised the people I would leave a strip.”

Pogue, with the intention of carrying out Patton’s purpose, removed the old fence from the north side of the addition, and reset it, with additional material, on the south line of the alley, leaving the strip outside for a road.

A hedge was planted inside of the fence and close to it, which grew up and made a hedge fence when the boards were finally taken away. In selling lots in the addition Pogue told the people that there would be a road through there.

He afterwards subdivided the lauds south of the alley into acre lots, and told the surveyor who laid it out about the roadway. He did not intend that it should be included in the survey of the acre lots, but the surveyor said that was the correct way to do and the roadway was therefore included in the survey. This was proper, since the fee was in Pogue, although burdened with the public easement.

Pogue sold different acre lots thus surveyed, and finally, December 19, 1868, sold most of them to I. P. McDowell. He told McDowell that the strip was designed for a street, and they both understood and considered that it was a street. It was then an open way through which people rode and drove.

McDowell owned and occupied the premises so purchased until appellant was organized, in 1876, when he sold them to it for its fair grounds. In that summer appellant built a board fence eight feet high on the south line of the alley, leaving it outside, as before.

At the west end of the alley Deacon Shepard, who did not own or claim to own the fee but owned property in block 7 of the addition, had extended his fence across it and used it

for stacking hay and for private purposes,—as some witnesses thought, for one year, while others thought it was longer.

When the Fairbury Fair bought the land from McDowell and put up its fair ground fence, it required Shepard to remove his cross-fence, which, he did, so as to leave out a strip for public use.

In 1889 Mr. Holly acquired title to the south two hundred feet of block 7 in the addition across the alley from the fair grounds, and during that summer, or the next one of 1890, extended its fences across the alley, closing it between First and Second streets and including it in the fair grounds.

This was the first act of obstruction or interference with the public easement by any owner of the fee in the land upon which the alley was located since it was first turned out to the public, about twenty-five years before.

Thousands of people traveled to Fairbury by horse drawn buggies and came by passenger train to attend the Fairbury Fair each summer. By erecting fences across the alley (which is now Pine Street), Mr. Holly created problems for pedestrians attending the Fairbury Fair.

Because Mr. Holly refused to remove his fences across Pine Street, the Fairbury Union Agricultural Board filed a lawsuit against Mr. Holly. The case wound its way through the court appeals process and ended up at the Illinois Supreme Court in 1897.

Illustration of Mr. Holly installing his fence across the alley in 1890. This alley is now named Pine Street. Image generated by Perplexity AI software.

The Illinois Supreme Court sided with the Fairbury Union Agricultural Board and Mr. Holly was ordered to remove his fences. The main reasons the Supreme Court decided in favor of the fair board was that Caleb Patton told many witnesses he was donating the land for a public alley, and then the alley was used by the public and maintained by the City for 20 years before Mr. Holly put up his fence.

This simple dispute about the alley turned out to be an Illinois landmark legal case. After this case was decided by the Supreme Court, any time there was a dispute about an alley, the 1897 Fairbury case was cited as precedent for those cases.

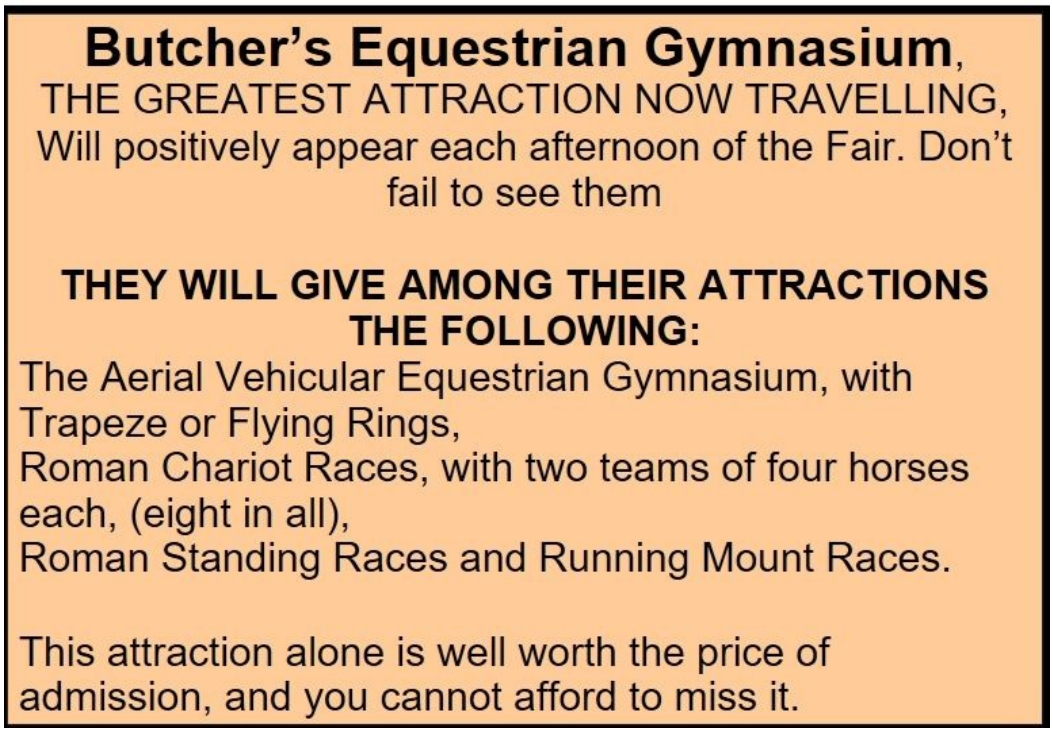
Since we do not have any old Blade newspapers until the several years after the Fairbury Fair started in 1876, this lawsuit provides valuable historical information about the history of the property now used every year for the Fairbury Fair.

CHAPTER 4

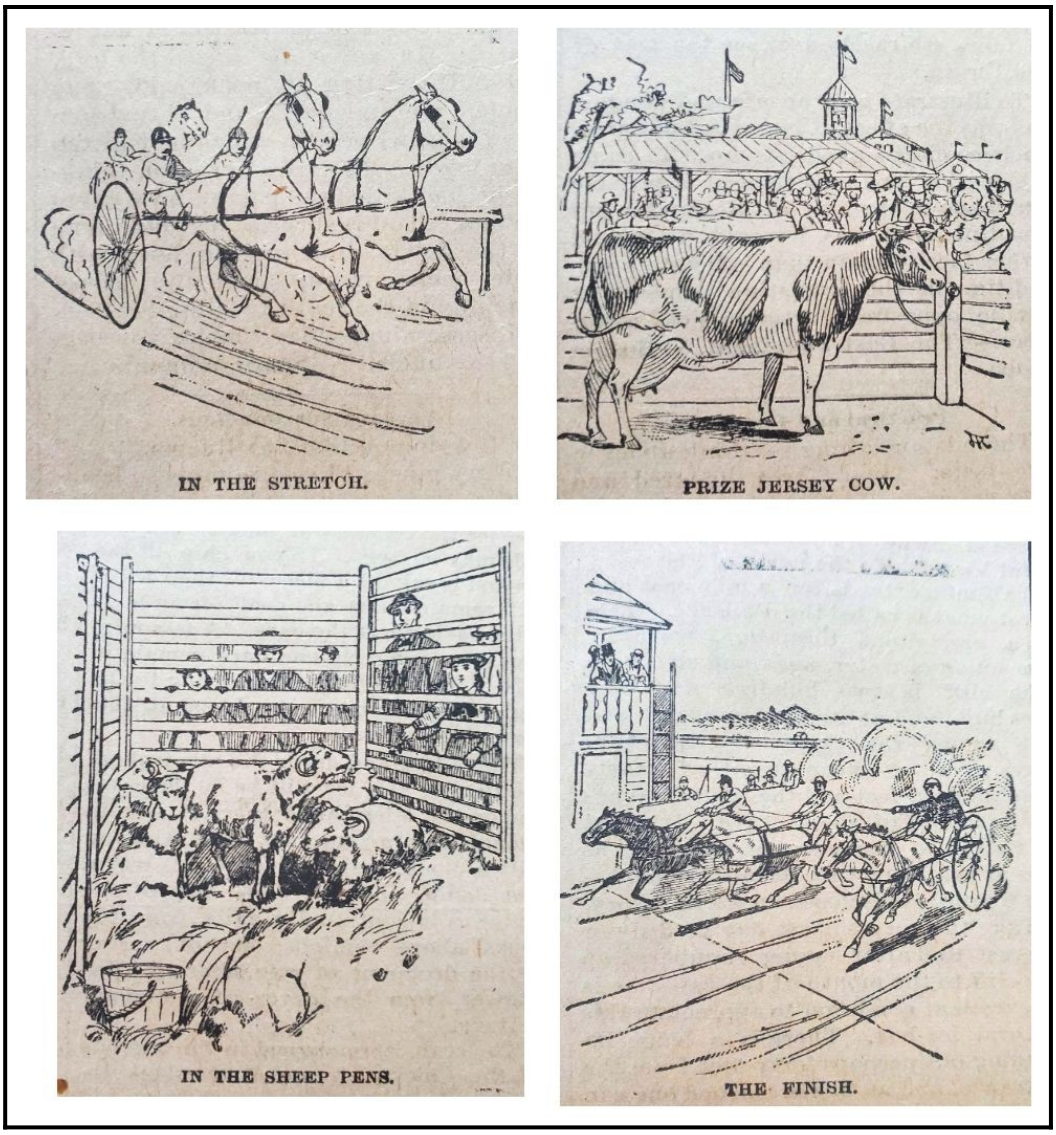
1891 to 1900

1891

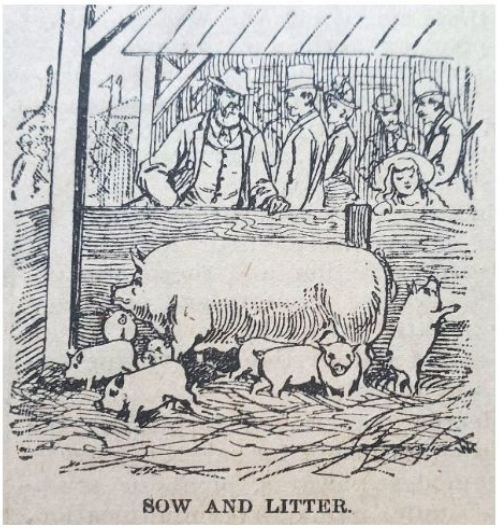
This fair was held on September 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. T. A. Beach was President and J. V. McDowell was Secretary. The big attraction at that fair was Butcher's Equestrian Gymnasium.


Butcher's Equestrian Gymnasium,
THE GREATEST ATTRACTION NOW TRAVELLING,
Will positively appear each afternoon of the Fair. Don't fail to see them
THEY WILL GIVE AMONG THEIR ATTRACTIONS THE FOLLOWING:
The Aerial Vehicular Equestrian Gymnasium, with Trapeze or Flying Rings,
Roman Chariot Races, with two teams of four horses each, (eight in all),
Roman Standing Races and Running Mount Races.
This attraction alone is well worth the price of admission, and you cannot afford to miss it.

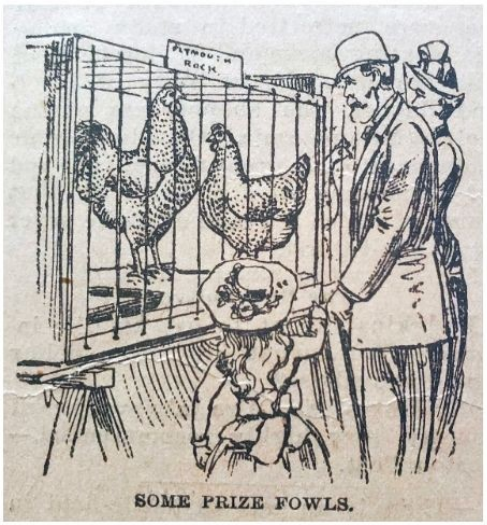
The Blade published seven hand-drawn illustrations promoting the Fairbury Fair.



Modern Jersey cows are usually bred to be a fairly uniform fawn or brown color, but in the late 1800s they often showed more variation, including animals with two distinct colors or white patches. This 1891 illustration accurately reflects that older appearance.



SOW AND LITTER.



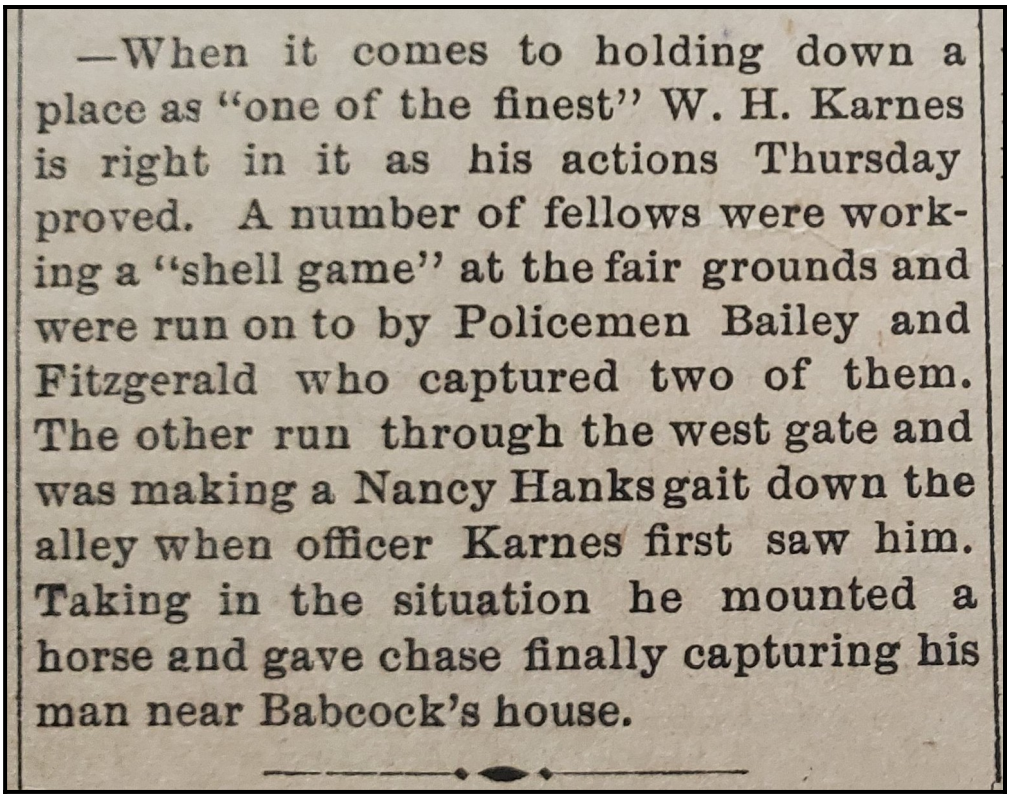
SOME PRIZE FOWLS.

IN HORTICULTURAL HALL.

1892

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. President was T. A. Beach and J. V. McDowell was Secretary. As had become the custom, many local Fairbury businesses set up exhibits at the fair. These included Walton's, Mapel Bros., Veatch & Straight, Parsons-Chapman, Perlee, Merit & Sims, and Phillips photography.

Any public event, like the Fairbury Fair, attracted some unsavory characters in their era. For example they might try to set up a "shell game." In 1892, a "shell game" was a crooked sidewalk gambling trick in which an operator hid a pea or small ball under one of three cups or shells, rapidly shifted them, and took bets on where it was. The hustler used sleight of hand to secretly remove or move the pea so the victim could not win, making it a classic small-stakes swindle rather than an honest game. The Blade reported on such a case at the 1892 Fairbury Fair.



—When it comes to holding down a place as "one of the finest" W. H. Karnes is right in it as his actions Thursday proved. A number of fellows were working a "shell game" at the fair grounds and were run on to by Policemen Bailey and Fitzgerald who captured two of them. The other run through the west gate and was making a Nancy Hanks gait down the alley when officer Karnes first saw him. Taking in the situation he mounted a horse and gave chase finally capturing his man near Babcock's house.

In this Blade clipping, "making a Nancy Hanks gait" means running very fast, like the famous trotting racehorse Nancy Hanks who set world speed records in the early 1890s. So the reporter is saying the fugitive was sprinting down the alley at top speed.

1893 – No Fairbury Fair

John Virgin, the first President of the Fairbury Fair, was appointed the Governor of Illinois to set up the agricultural exhibit at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition (also called the 1893 Chicago World's Fair).

No Fairbury fair was held that year. Many Fairbury residents rode the trains from Fairbury to Chicago and attended the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition.

1894

This fair was held on September 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The President was T. A. Beach and J. V. McDowell was Secretary. The Fairbury Cornet Band provided the music for this fair.

The officers for this fair were published in the Blade.

Officers of the Fair.

President—T. A. Beach.
Vice-President—H. Robinson.
Treasurer—L. B. Dominy.
Secretary—J. V. McDowell.
Directors—Benj. Cumpston, Ed Mahoney, O. F. Avery, J. W. McDowell, S. M. Barnes, S. L. Conine, S. Herr, A. H. Remington, T. T. Babcock, John Zimmerman. G. Y. McDowell.

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS.

Grounds—T. A. Beach.
Stalls and forage—E. W. Mahoney.
Floral hall—C. J. Merit.
Permits and privileges—O. S. Westervelt.

At a small fair in 1894, the Superintendent of Permits and Privileges was the official who oversaw all paid concessions and outside attractions on the grounds. This person handled the letting of stands and booths, set and collected concession fees, and regulated shows, games, and vendors so they operated within fair rules and did not interfere with the main exhibits or programs.

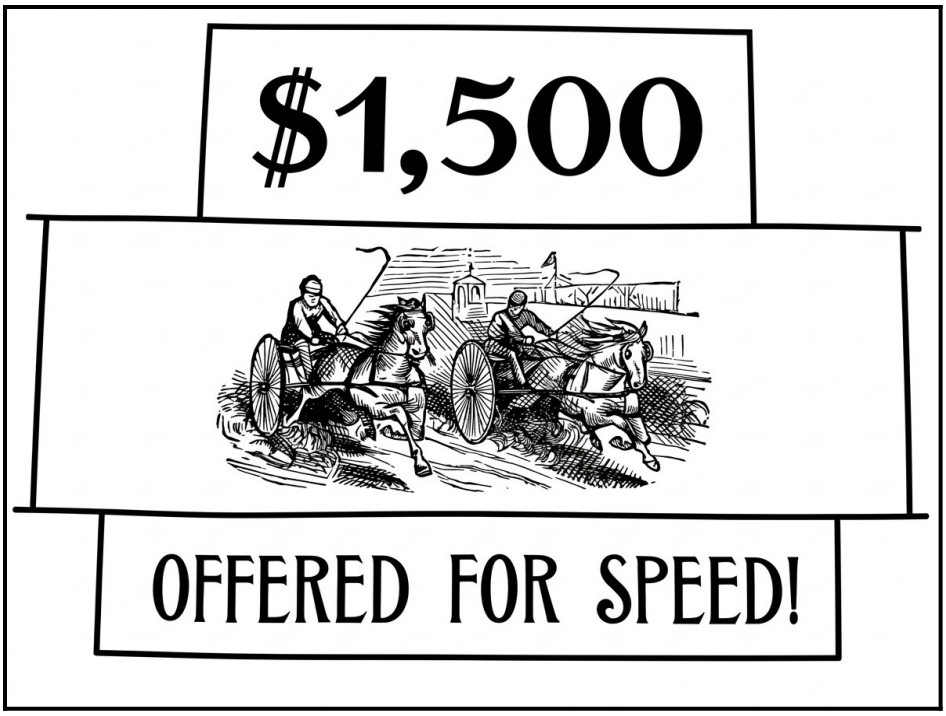
The superintendents of the various departments was also published by the Blade.

SUPERINTENDENTS OF DEPARTMENTS.

Class A, Cattle—S. L. Conine.
Class B, Draft horses—J. R. Strawn.
Class B. All other horses—S. Herr.
Class C, Sheep—J. F. Cooper.
Class D, Swine—J. W. McDowell.
Class E, Poultry—A. H. Remington.
Class F, Speed—P. C. James.
Class G, Implements—Hugh Robinson.
Class H, Fruits and vegetables—B. Cumpston.
Class I, Farm products—J. J. Taylor.
Class K, Mineralogy, geology, conchology, etc—Prof. Richardson.
Class L, Merchandise—G. Y. McDowell.
Class M. Unennmerated—J Worthington.
Class N, Canned fruits and relishes, jellies, jams and butters—Mrs. E. D. Powell.
Class O, Paintings, drawings and sculpture—Henry Remington.
Class P, Flowers—Mrs. A. F. Filley.
Class Q Products of dairy and kitchen—Mrs. S. B. Church.
Class R, Textile fabrics, needle and fancy work—Mrs. J. J. Pence.
Class S. Household fabrics—Mrs. Wm. Goslin.

There were a total of 19 people who were superintendents of departments at that fair.

The Blade also created a neat promotion for the horse racing at the Fairbury Fair.



1895

This was the 19th annual Fairbury Fair and it was held on September 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. The Blade reported that bicycles were becoming very popular in the Fairbury area and therefore there would be $300 in prizes for bicycle races at that fair. This amount would be equivalent to $11,800 in today's dollars.

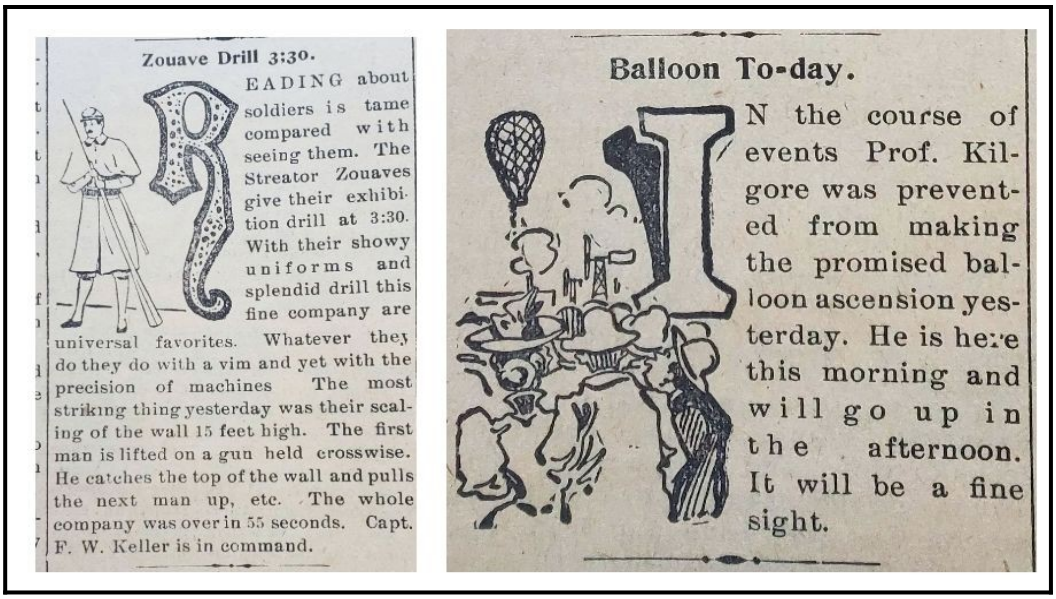
By 1895, Fairbury was caught up in the national "bicycle craze," when the new safety bicycle had become a fashionable, practical way to travel and a centerpiece of sporting culture.

The Blade noted that this was the "Best of 19 Fairs" because of the perfect weather and great attendance.

1897

The 1896 Blade book is missing. The 1897 book reported that fair was held on September 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The President was R. C. Straight and the Secretary was O. S. Westervelt.

The two main attractions that year were balloon ascensions by Professor Kilgore and military drills by the Streator Zouave Cadets.



Zouave Drill 3:30.

READING about soldiers is tame compared with seeing them. The Streator Zouaves give their exhibition drill at 3:30. With their showy uniforms and splendid drill this fine company are universal favorites. Whatever they do they do with a vim and yet with the precision of machines The most striking thing yesterday was their scaling of the wall 15 feet high. The first man is lifted on a gun held crosswise. He catches the top of the wall and pulls the next man up, etc. The whole company was over in 55 seconds. Capt. F. W. Keller is in command.

Balloon To-day.

IN the course of events Prof. Kilgore was prevented from making the promised balloon ascension yesterday. He is here this morning and will go up in the afternoon. It will be a fine sight.

The Blade reported that the 1897 fair was so successful that it put the Society out of debt.

1898

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Dr. S. M. Barnes was President and O. S. Westervelt was Secretary. The main attractions that year were a high diver and a circus. Lutyen's Pontiac Band provided the music for this far.

BERT MAYO'S

Great Trained Animal Exhibition and European Circus.

As free as the air. No charge to see it. At an enormous expense the Association has secured this marvelous aggregation of Human and Equine Talent for GRAND FREE EXHIBITIONS EVERY DAY. One performance will be given in front of the Grand Stand at 11 a. m. each day, and others in the afternoon under the company's mammoth canvas—ALL FREE.

SOME OF THE GREAT FEATS.

BERT MAYO, principal bareback rider; he leaps from the ground to the back of a horse while the animal goes at breakneck speed.
TRAINED PONIES playing see-saw.
CURLY, the dog equestrian.
Mr. Mayo's celebrated trick horse, GEN. JOHN A. LOGAN, pronounced by the press and public the most wonderful animal in the world.
The OLD CLOWN and the trick mule "JERRY MEYER" who always bring shouts of laughter.
A squad of ponies drilling like trained soldiers and keeping perfect time to music.
BRAVO, the finest, most beautiful and perfect developed equine in the world, and performing more tricks than any other horse.
Hurricane hurdle riding.
The laughable kicking mules.
And many other novel and startling acts.

Great Special Attractions

Thomas J. Tremaine

Alias "Toronto Red,"

Champion High Diver and Fancy Swimmer of the world will each day of the Fair make

A THRILLING DIVE

From a Steel Tower..... to a tank of water on the ground. ALL FREE.

80 FEET HIGH

The Blade reported the high diving act was popular.

> The high diver made his plunge a couple of times yesterday and his descent from the high tower makes a thrilling tableau. He makes a gallant spring and goes into the tank like a shot. It is well worth seeing.

Bert Mayo's act was also popular.

> The trained horses and trick mule and trained dog of Bert Mayo's catches the crowd and is one of the most popular attractions on the ground. These free exhibitions appear to please the people immensely.

1899

This fair was held on September 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22. The President was R. C. Straight and the Secretary was A. O. Westervelt. Burch's Band provided the music for this fair.

The main attractions at that fair were daredevil Miss Ida LeRoy and the Kemp sisters wild-west show.

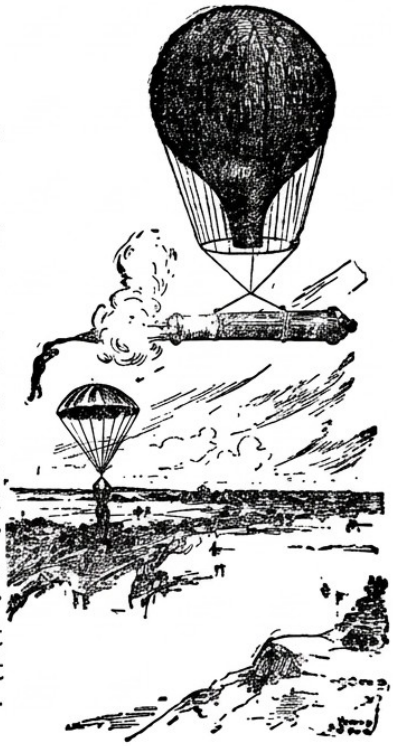
THE KEMP SISTERS
Roman Hippodrome
AND DARING Wild West Show.
This is one of the greatest wild west shows before the people to-day. A magnificent combination of blooded stock, bronchos, ponies, cowboys, lady equestriens, kings and queens of the Roman Hippodrome and bareback standing races.

Shot From a Cannon While In Mid=Air.

One of the most daring feats ever attempted will be performed by

Miss Ida LeRoy.

A monster balloon is inflated with hot air, a huge loaded cannon is suspended from the ropes, into the mouth of which the iron-nerved aeronaut crawls, taking her parachute with her. Everything is then made ready and the balloon is released from its fastenings, rises majestically and sails upward toward the clouds. When it has reached a height of three or four thousand feet, a signal is fired and the great cannon belches forth its precious load of human freight with a mighty boom. The lady and her parachute are hurled into space, the parachute opening and carrying her safely to earth. This is without a doubt the most daring, as well as the most thrilling feature of the nineteenth century.



Fair officials had their hands full trying to make sure everything was done according to the rules as reported by the Blade below.

> The “fakirs,” well, they are here also. If there are any in the country that did not get here they must have been dead or near it. Superintendent of Privileges T. S. O. McDowell has his hands full and the grounds full also. He has let almost 100 privileges and the grounds in the rear of the grand stand present the appearance of the midway at the world’s fair.

In 1899, “fakirs” meant traveling pitchmen and small-time swindlers running dubious games, selling quack medicines, or operating other shady concessions, not literal Eastern holy men. The word was borrowed from the original term for ascetic wonder-workers and repurposed in American carnival slang for **grafters** and tricksters who preyed on fair goers.

The daredevil woman was very popular as the Blade reported.

> Miss Ida LeRoy, the aeronaut gave another fine exhibition. The wind was high until abut half past four, when it died down and the immense gas bag was filled and soared majestically upwards. The drop was made about half a mile east of town. She will make another ascension today.

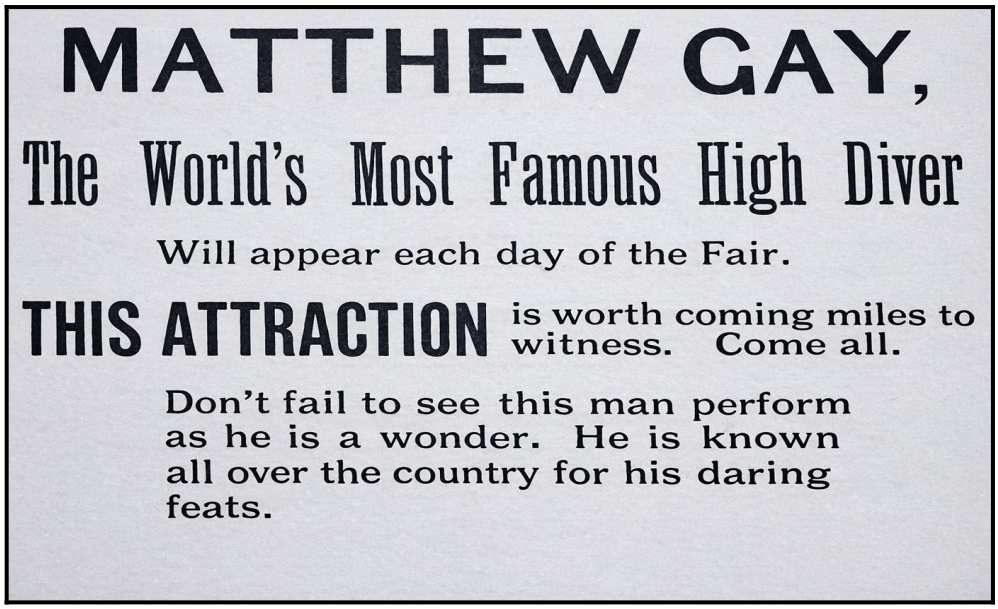
At the 1899 Fairbury Fair, the “balloon ascensions” were not simple hot-air balloons heated over a flame, but gas balloons inflated with hydrogen produced on the grounds. Showmen typically used portable generators that reacted metal (often iron or zinc) with acid to create hydrogen, which was then piped into the balloon envelope to give it enough lift for a dramatic ascent in front of the crowds.

1900

This fair was held on September 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. R. C. Straight and A. O. Westervelt were President and Secretary.

The big attractions for that fair were Bronco John's wild west show and high diver Mathew Gay.

BRONCO JOHN is one of the most noted frontiersmen in the west and formerly traveled with Buffalo Bill. The exhibition given by himself and cowboys, trappers, and hunters is second to none traveling.


MATTHEW GAY,
The World's Most Famous High Diver
Will appear each day of the Fair.
THIS ATTRACTION is worth coming miles to witness. Come all.
Don't fail to see this man perform as he is a wonder. He is known all over the country for his daring feats.

A new item for that year's fair was a school exhibit that was very popular.

THE SCHOOL DISPLAY.

Superintendent C. E. DeButts, assisted by Mrs. DeButts have arranged one of the most attractive as well as instructive displays of school work ever seen in the county. It occupies the center of the main hall and is made up of work of the pupils in the various grades of the public schools. The arrangement of the work is artistic and attracts the eye from all parts of the hall. One could probably spend hours of examination of this interesting display. It embraces work of the pupils in all the grades and each grade shows a wonderful proficiency. There is also on exhibition in this department a complete set of the new school books recently adopted for the county.

CHAPTER 5

1901 to 1910

1901

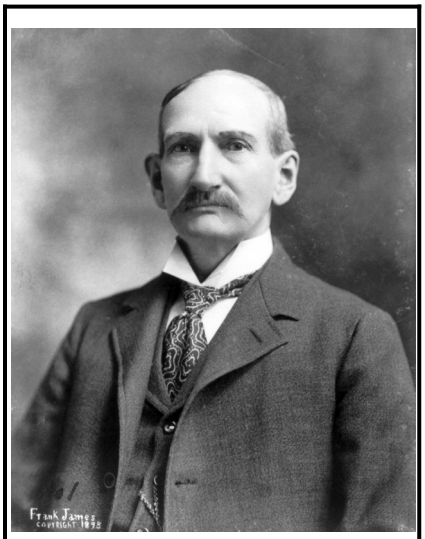
The fair was held on September 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6th. The President was J. W. McDowell and Secretary was A. D. Westervelt. One of the main attraction was the Kemp Sisters and their wild west show that appeared at the 1899 fair.

The other main attraction that year was one of the most famous (or infamous depending on your perspective) people ever at a Fairbury Fair!! Frank James, brother of famous outlaw Jesse James, was contracted to be the starter of the horse races at the 1901 Fairbury Fair.

The Blade had the following ad announcing Frank James would at the Fairbury Fair.

> **FRANK JAMES**
>
> A brother of Jesse James and at one time the most notorious outlaws in the United States, but who reformed some years ago and has been living quietly at his home in Missouri, has been secured to start the races during the fair. He is undoubtedly the best starter in the country and this is the first time he has visited Illinois.

Frank James (Alexander Franklin James) was the older brother of famed outlaw Jesse James and a key member of the James–Younger Gang, taking part in bank, train, and stagecoach robberies across several states. He surrendered after Jesse's death and was tried multiple times for murder and robbery, but juries acquitted him in every case, so despite his years as an outlaw and time spent in jail awaiting trial, he was never actually convicted of a crime.



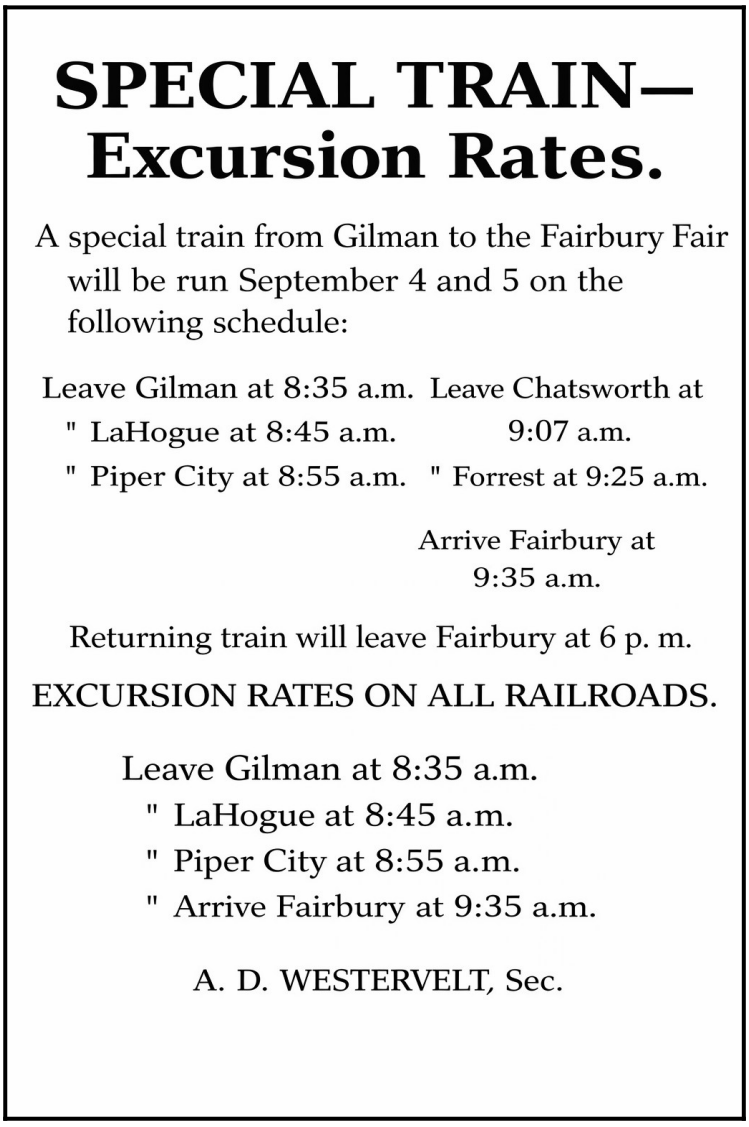
Frank James photo taken in 1898.

The Colfax Military Band provided the music at the 1901 Fairbury fair.

COLFAX MILITARY BAND

Will furnish music thruout the week. This organization is one of the most celebrated in this section of the state and will entertain the vast throng who will hear them.

Every year since the Fair started in 1876, Blade ads mention that fair goers can get "Excursion Rates" if they travel by train to attend the Fairbury Fair.



SPECIAL TRAIN—
Excursion Rates.

A special train from Gilman to the Fairbury Fair will be run September 4 and 5 on the following schedule:

Leave Gilman at 8:35 a.m.
" LaHogue at 8:45 a.m.
" Piper City at 8:55 a.m.
Leave Chatsworth at 9:07 a.m.
" Forrest at 9:25 a.m.
Arrive Fairbury at 9:35 a.m.

Returning train will leave Fairbury at 6 p. m.

EXCURSION RATES ON ALL RAILROADS.

Leave Gilman at 8:35 a.m.
" LaHogue at 8:45 a.m.
" Piper City at 8:55 a.m.
" Arrive Fairbury at 9:35 a.m.

A. D. WESTERVELT, Sec.

Each year, the Fair Board had to negotiate these special rates with the railroads each year, but within a familiar pattern rather than starting from scratch. Railroads all over the Midwest routinely offered "excursion" trains and discounted round-trip fares for fairs, picnics, and

world's fairs, and those rates were set up as temporary, advertised specials that had to be agreed to and posted in advance for each event.

The Kemp sisters. The black and white image from the Blade was almost illegible. Fotor.com was used to repair the image and then colorize it.

The Kemp Sisters performance was very good again per the Blade.

KEMP SISTERS.

The Kemp Sisters' shows kept the track hot between the races giving a number of great acts. There were several the Fairbury crowds had seen previously but they were none the less appreciated. The new acts shown were all good. The high-jumping Welsh pony ridden by one of the Misses Kemp could jump, and jump well. The fancy shooting by the lady and gentleman at swinging glass balls was another new act which was highly appreciated by the large crowd. But it took the bucking bull to cap the climax. The animal is a huge black and white fellow and was led onto the track by a rope attached to a ring in its nose. He was saddled in front of the grand stand and a cowboy mounted him. If the people expected to see a tame exhibition they were badly fooled for the minute the bull was turned loose he tore down the track at a terrific pace bucking worse than any bronco ever did under the saddle and kept it up until the rider dismounted. It was great fun for the crowd.

The Blade reported that Frank James did a great job as the starter for the horse races.

> The races were good and hotly contested. Frank James, the starter, proved to be a good man for the place. As a rule there is a great deal of jockeying done and much time wasted, but such business did not go with Mr. James and after coming to the pole once or twice Mr. James layed the law down to the drivers and they obeyed it. The consequence was that the races went off without an undue amount of friction.

1902

This fair was held on September 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The President was J. W. McDowell and the Secretary was M. M. Jacobs. The main attractions that year were Spencer's Military Band and Rice's Great Dog and Pony Show.

REVOLVING PYRAMID
Rice's Great Dog and Pony Show
Prof. Rice will give each day of the fair the grandest exhibitions of trained dogs and ponies ever presented to the public. Don't fail to see this great special attraction.

In 1902, one of the few ads that specifically mentions how much the train fare was reduced was included in the big ad for this fair. Fair goers only had to pay one and a third fare for the round trip instead of two times the one-way rate.

Special Railroad Rates and Trains

The TP&W and Wabash railroads will give a special rate of one and one-third fare for the round trip between Fairbury and all points within a radius of 40 miles on their lines. The TP&W will run a special train Gilman to Fairbury Wednesday and Thursday.

The 1902 fair also sponsored an Old Settlers' day where any citizen age 70 and older was admitted free to the Fair on Thursday.

The Blade reported that this event was very popular with pioneer settlers that attended the Fair.

> It was old settlers day and the old settlers were present from all over this part of the country. Old friends and neighbors who had not met in years previous again clasped hands and recounted past experiences. It was thought that the threshing machines would not stop but they evidently did as it looked as though everybody was here. They all enjoyed it too. They applauded the band and laughed at the antics of the trained dogs, monkeys, and ponies. Prof. Rice has a good show. His animals are splendidly trained and obey his commands as perfectly as if they were human beings.

In 2026, the TP&W railroad typically runs one freight train per day through Fairbury. The TP&W stopped passenger train service in Fairbury back in 1933, so the one freight train is all we see today.

It is hard to believe that back in 1902, there 19 trains entering or leaving Fairbury every day!!

TOLEDO PEORIA & WESTERN

Time card effective Sunday, January 19.

EASTWARD.

No. 2	Atlantic Express o	8 49 p m
No. 4	Chicago Express o.....	2:17 p m
No. 6	Mail and Express x	8.08 a m
No. 8	Chicago special o	2:48 a m
No. 16	Way Freight x . ar 4 00 p m lv	4:20 p m
No. 18	Stock Express o.....	12:10 a m

WESTWARD.

No. 1	Mail and Express x.....	5:38 p m
No. 3	Pacific Passenger x	5:50 a m
No. 5	Chicago Express o.....	1.53 p m
No. 7	Peoria Express o....	2.43 a m
No. 9	Local passenger, Sunday only.	7:28 a m
No. 15	Way Freight x...ar 7:40 a m. lv	9:15 a m
No. 17	Time Freight o.....	12:10 a m

O—Daily.
X—Daily except Sunday.

No.6 has through cars for Logansport via Effner,

Nos. 4 and 5 have Chicago car attached and connect with Wabash at Forrest.

E. N. ARMSTRONG, G, P.A.
Peoria, Ill

G. P. WESTERVELT, ageut,
Fairbury, Ill.

FAIRBURY:

NORTH.		SOUTH.	
Mail.....	11:55 a m	Mail	7:40 a m
Express	5:53 p m	Express	5:15 p m
Loc freight	6:40 a m	Loc freight.	4:45 p m

All trains daily except Sunday.

1903

This fair was held on August 31 and September 1, 2, 3, and 4. The President was J. W. McDowell and the secretary was M. M. Jacobs.

There were supposed to be several main attractions including balloon ascensions and Spencer's Military Band.

The Fairbury Fair was a relatively small fair compared to the large city fairs and the Illinois State Fair. Therefore, they likely struggled to find acts that would actually show up for the Fairbury Fair. According to the Blade, 1903 was such a year.

> **A Little Out of Luck**
>
> The fair association has been having bad luck with the special attractions this far. The people who were to have made the balloon ascensions failed to come and could not be found. Efforts were at once made to get other attractions and Rogers & Rogers, two celebrated trapeze performers were secured. They failed to come yesterday morning and later a message was received from the theatrical agency saying that Rogers had broken his arm while taking down a rigging where they were performing at one of the parks in Chicago.

1904

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The President was J. W. McDowell and the Secretary was F. F. Brydia. The Blade reported that since the 1903 fair, a new amphitheater had been been built and would be used for the first time at the 1904 Fairbury fair.

> The vast new amphitheater with a comfortable seating capacity for 3,000 people will be appreciated by everyone. The band stand is directly in the center of this great structure, and the Fairbury band, one of the best musical bodies in Central Illinois will give concerts both morning and afternoon. The band will be strengthened by some of the best musicians in the state and the people will hear some delightful music. Almost every seat in the grandstand is in the shade.

For the 1904 Fairbury fair, the Fair Board took a different approach to advertising the fair in the Blade. For this fair, they stated five reasons why every Fairbury area person must go to the Fairbury Fair.

- **First Reason**
  -Because you will see the best show you ever saw for the money in your life.
  -Races
  -Indians
  -Cowboys
  -The racing will be simply fine. Fairbury is in a circuit now that will bring the best and most horses to the fair ever seen on the grounds.

-Kemp Sisters great wild west shows and a band of Indians will be the special attractions. The Kemps have greatly improved and enlarged their show since their last appearance in this city and now have the the best wild west show traveling. They will keep you interested all of the time.

- **Second Reason**
  -You will see the best livestock and agricultural exhibit to be seen outside of the state fair.

- **Third Reason**
  -You will see the finest exhibits of merchandise, textile fabrics, paintings, drawings, etc., ever exhibited in this part of the state.

- **Fourth Reason**
  -There will be plenty of room to sit down in good comfortable seats in the new amphitheater.

- **Fifth Reason**
  -Your neighbors will all be there enjoying themselves and you have just the same right to have a good time and give your family a good time as they have.

The Blade reported that the wild west show was not as popular that year with the fair goers.

The Kemp Sisters shows kept things going between the races. They were very good but not as good as if they had been a novelty. They performed several new acts and did some excellent riding. The Indians were rather few in number, owing Mr. Kemp said, to a number of them being sent back to the reservation for drunkenness. They gave a war dance however. Wild west shows are evidently getting a little old for Fairbury fair goers.

1905

This fair was held on September 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.The President was J. W. McDowell and the Secretary was F. F. Brydia.

The Fair Board likely received complaints from the 1904 fair that attendees were tired of seeing wild-west shows. So, the Fair Board went for a main act that was completely different. They booked a troupe of Japanese gymnasts to perform at the 1905 Fairbury Fair.

JAPANESE at the FAIR

For the amusement of the people on the afternoons of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday the OKABA ROYAL JAPANESE TROUPE, consisting of eight members will give exhibitions in front of the fine new ampitheatre FREE OF CHARGE. These Japs are the greatest performers that have ever left their native land to make exhibitions in a foreign country and the management of the Fair have secured them only by the expenditure of a large amount of money. Remember THEY EXHIBIT FREE OF CHARGE in front of the new ampitheatre on the afternoons of,

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY.

FREE PERFORMANCE

opposite the large new ampitheatre on the afternoons of

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,

OKABE ROYAL

JAPANESE TROUPE

consisting of eight people. The Japs are recognized the world over as the greatest performing acrobats, hand and feet jugglers and gymnasts and only by the expenditure of a large amount of money were the Okabe Royal Japanese Troupe induced to leave their home country and come to the Fairbury Fair to give exhibitions on the afternoons of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Remember their exhibitions are free and take place between the races on a specially constructed platform opposite the large new ampitheatre.

In 1890, Henry Foster built the first lighting plant in Fairbury. After 1890, Fairbury citizens could have electricity run to their house. Some farm families bought their own generators and had electricity on their farm. Most farm families did not receive electricity until about 1940.

Apparently, by the time of the 1905 Fairbury Fair, quite a few women were looking for electrical products that would ease the heavy burden of taking care of a household. The Blade reported that a new exhibit was set up for electrically powered household products.

ELECTRIC COOKING

The Fairbury Electric Light, Heat, and Power Co. occupied part of the north side of the east wing with an electrical display for cooking, ironing, etc., and it was certainly a novelty. Biscuits baked in an oven and coffee made in a pot heated by electricity were fed the multitude. An electric iron was also on display. Mrs. W. B. Decker had charge of the display.

1906

This fair was held on September 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. After complaints about getting bored seeing the Kemp Sisters Wild West Show too many times, the Fair Board chose the Japanese gymnasts for the 1905 Fairbury Fair. They continued to chose a different type of act for the 1906 Fairbury Fair when they chose the Bedouin Arabs act.

Special Attraction at the Fairbury Fair, Sept. 3-7
THE BEDOUIN ARABS
Genuine Sons of the Desert.
Greatest Acrobats in Existance.
In their $10,000 Challenge Act. They will perform twice daily free to everybody attending the Fair. Eclipse anything in this line ever seen in this country.

The crowd was very pleased with the Bedouin Arabs act as the Blade reported after the fair was over.

THE BEDOUIN ARABS

The eight Bedouin Arabs headed by Saad Dahdua gave two performances upon a platform in front of the grand stand each day of the fair. To say that they pleased the crowds would be putting it mildly. They were by far the best attraction ever seen at the fair and their wonderful acrobatic feats and feats of strength were the wonder of the many thousands who saw them perform. Dahdua excited the admiration of the throngs by carrying the entire troupe upon his shoulders, a living weight of upwards of 1200 pounds, while the tumbling of the troupe was marvelous.

1907

This fair was held on September 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Hiett B. Taylor was President and G. B. Gordon was Secretary. For the main event, an airship was contracted to perform at this fair.

AIRSHIP WILL BE INFLATED MONDAY

Everything is in readiness for the big Fairbury fair. The grounds have been put in first-class condition, new stables built for the fast horses, buildings put in good condition and the track never was in better shape for good racing.

The greatest feature of the fair this year, and in fact it is the greatest feature ever offered by any fair association, is the airship Columbia. This vast bird of the air will be inflated Monday and each day of the fair will make daily flights, weather permitting, from the grounds. Capt. Al-Dair, the famous aeronaut, will steer the ship in its flight thru space. Capt. Al-Dair is the only man who ever crossed Lake Michigan with an air ship, in fact is the only man who ever attempted to cross Lake Michigan in the air. It is a thrilling sight, and the thousands who will attend the Fairbury fair have a great treat in store for them.

See the

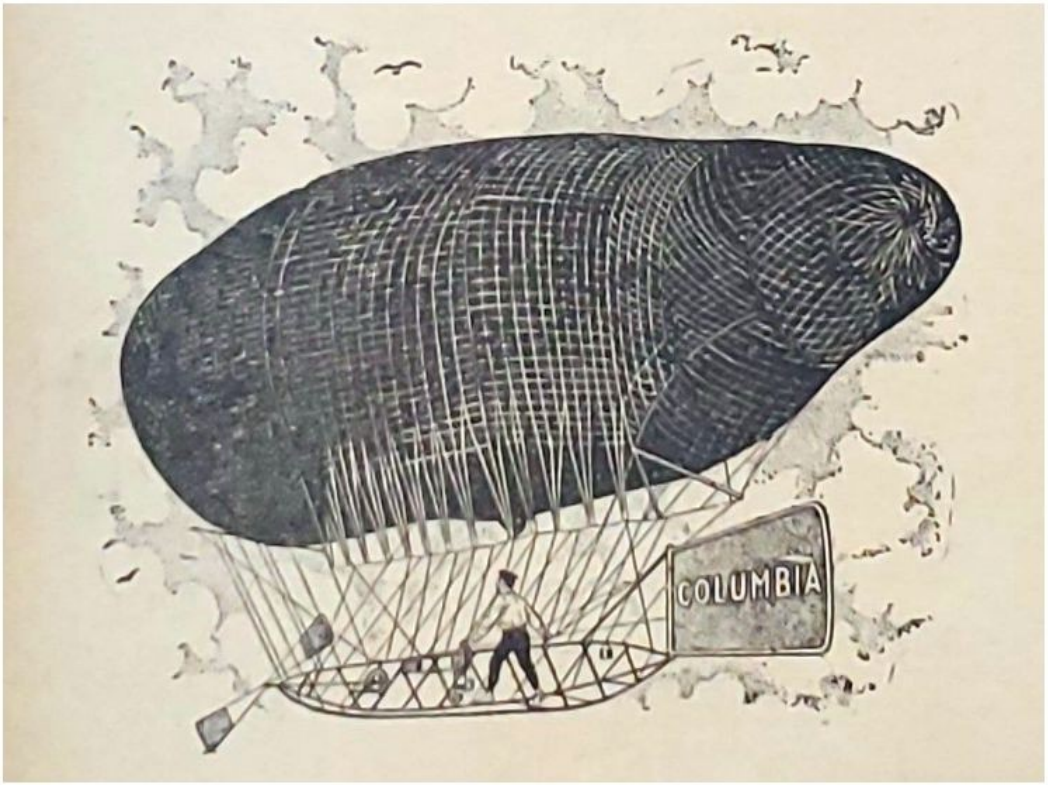
Air Ship Fly

At the Big

Fairbury Fair

Fairbury, Illinois

Sept. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6



The airship attraction at the fair had its fair share of issues. The first problem was filling the balloon as noted by the Blade.

> The airship did not go up Tuesday, much to the disappointment of the crowd, as well as to Prof. Botkin, the owner. It was not the fault of the latter. The artesian water from out city well does not mix properly with the ingredients used in forming the gas but this has finally been overcome and unless there is too much wind the first flight will be made some time this afternoon. The fair association pays Mr. Botkin for making the ascensions and if none are made he is made to suffer financially.

In hindsight, it was probably not a true "bad water" issue at Fairbury at all, but a finicky gas-generation setup that didn't play well with the local artesian supply. In that era, small portable gas plants were temperamental and highly sensitive to water chemistry, so the more likely culprit was the design or adjustment of the gas creation apparatus rather than any inherent problem with Fairbury's water.

Per the Blade, the airship finally lifted off the next day, Wednesday.

> **Air Ship Makes First Flight**
>
> The airship made its first flight at the fair grounds Wednesday afternoon. It did not go up until nearly 6 o'clock. There was considerable trouble in getting it thoroughly inflated and the shower interfered with the ascension for nearly an hour. It arose slowly and went to the east, and as Prof. Mannerly started to guide the ship to the south, the steering wheel in the gear caught in the netting and broke two of the paddles. The ship then floated to the south over the fair ground and alighted just east of the grounds. Prof. Mannerly made another ascension at 7 o'clock in an effort to get the ship back into the grounds. He went up about 1,000 feet but he encountered a strong current of wind from the north and it drove him back. He alighted several hundred yards east of where he landed the first time. He will make another ascension this afternoon at 5 o'clock if the wind is not too strong.

1908

The 1908 Blade book is missing. Nationally, 1908 was a pivotal year because Henry Ford introduced his low-cost Model T automobile. Between about 1903 and 1908, only a handful of Fairbury citizens could afford to buy an automobile. Most of these citizens were medical doctors or business owners.

Henry Ford made it possible for the average family to afford to buy an automobile. By about 1920, all Fairbury city residents had replaced their horses with automobiles. Farmers continued to use their horses until about 1940, when they were replaced by internal combustion engine powered tractors.

1909

This is the first year of the Blade that started to have ads for automobiles sold in Fairbury by local dealers. The first ad was for the Fairbury Automobile Company and the brands they sold

included Halladay, Cadillac, Buick, Jackson, Ford, and Pierce Arrow. The Halladay was manufactured in Streator, Illinois.

The featured act for the 1909 Fairbury Fair was Big Otto and his trained leopards. Other acts included the Royal Chef, the Yankee Doodle Girl, the Wizard of Wizeland, and the Irish Senator. The Yankee Doodle Girl and the Wizard of Wizeland were musical comedies.

Big Fairbury Fair Free Attraction

BIG OTTO and his Trained Leopards will be one of the great free attractions at the Fairbury Fair. The contracts for this thrilling act have been signed and the act will be given twice a day in a big steel cage in front of the ampitheatre.

This was the first year the Blade mentioned the Fairbury Fair had to plan and allow space to park automobiles at the fair.

> The society has allotted the space west of the west gate for automobiles. There is room for over 200 machines and the space will probably be filled each day.

Big Otto and his trained leopards was a very popular act. Apparently the wife of the head animal trainer was very pregnant, and delivered the first baby ever born on the fair grounds.

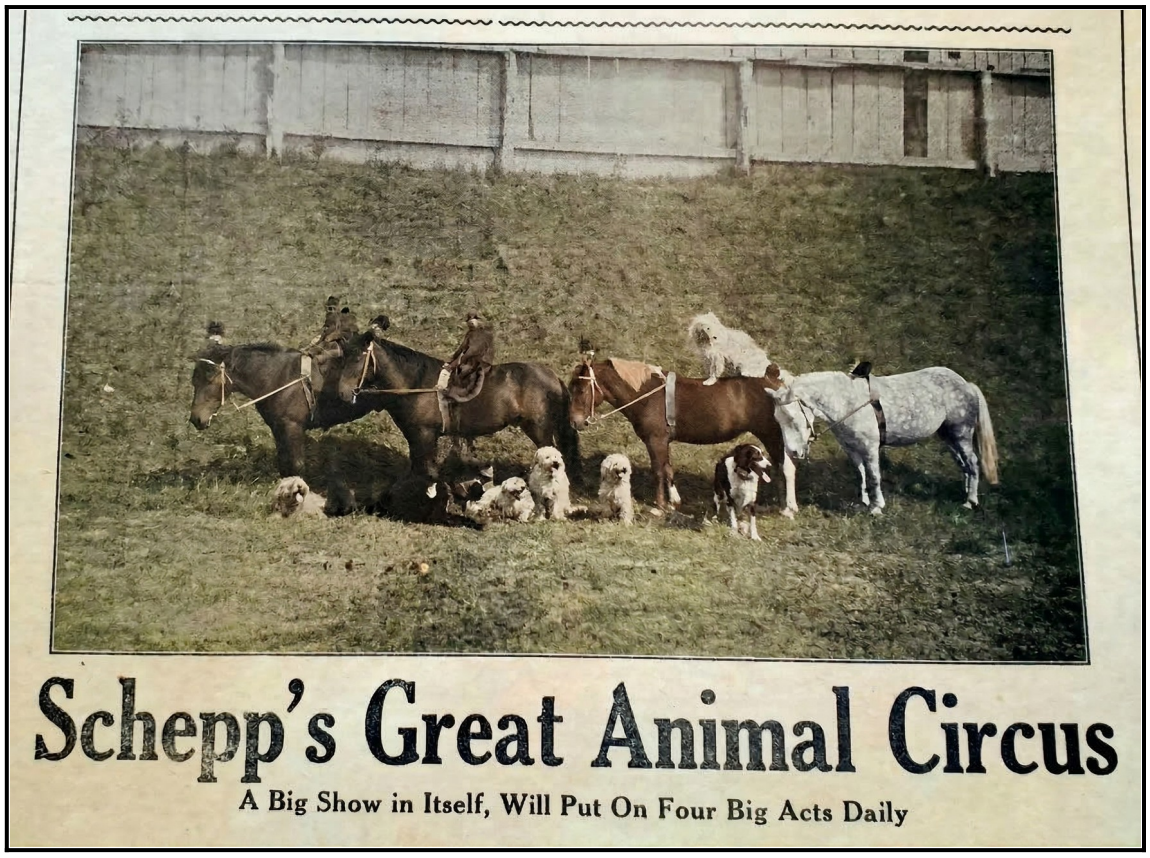
> **Baby Born on Fair Grounds**
>
> The first baby girl ever born on the Fairbury fair grounds was born Wednesday evening about 8 o'clock to Mr. and Mrs. Sanders. Mr. Sanders is the head animal trainer with the Big Otto shows and came thru with the leopards. The mother and child are perfectly at home in the tent in the rear of the big platform and in the same tent are the six big leopards, together with seven little leopards, two of which were born Sunday evening. Mr. Sanders also has eight full-blooded coach dog puppies and he says he is doing pretty well, thank you. He is one of the most

celebrated animal trainers of the world, having been in the business all his life. Mrs. Sanders and daughter are getting along nicely and the daughter's name will probably be Fairbury. Mr. Sanders thinks the daughter is pretty enough to be exhibited with the little leopards.

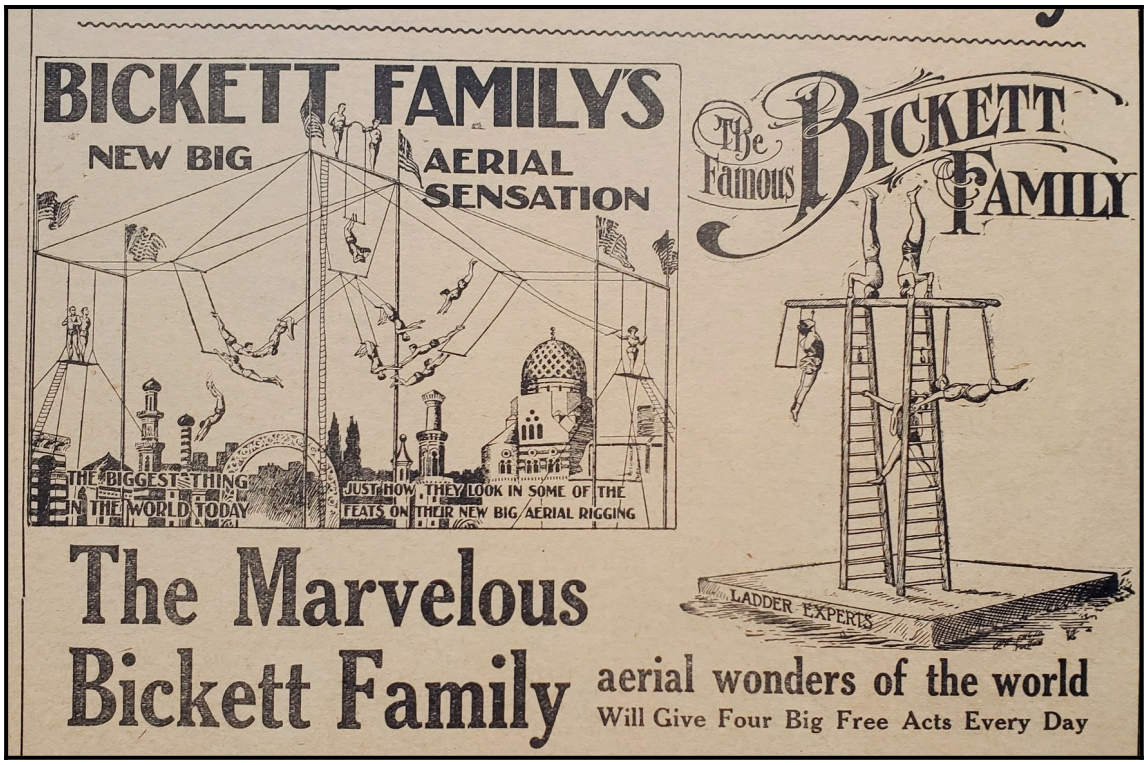
A follow-up Blade article reported they named the baby girl Essie Fairbury Sanders.

1910

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The main act was Schepp's Great Animal Circus.

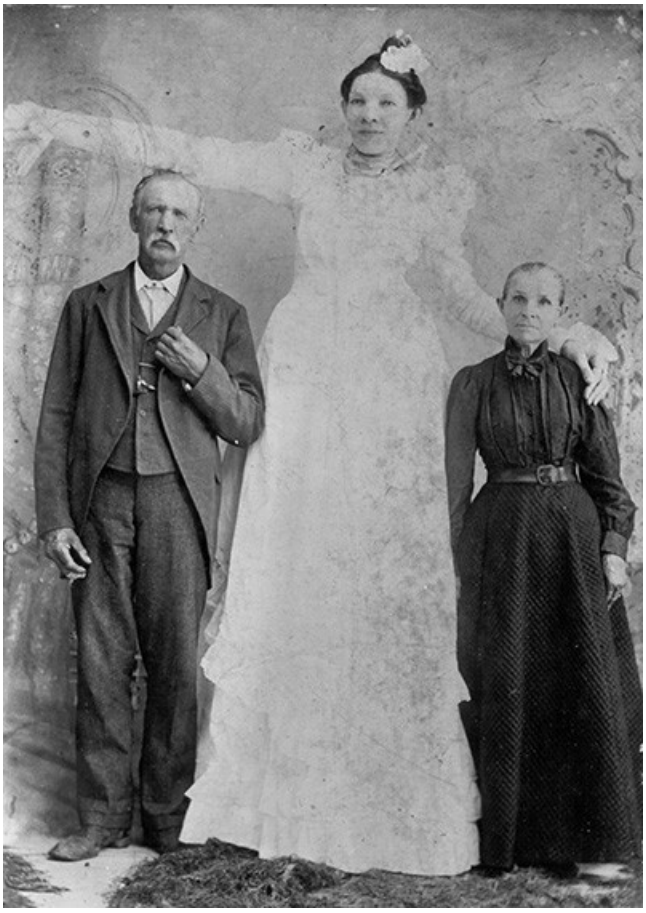


Another main act was the Marvelous Bickett Family, aerial performers.


BICKETT FAMILY'S
NEW BIG
AERIAL
SENSATION
THE BIGGEST THING IN THE WORLD TODAY
JUST HOW THEY LOOK IN SOME OF THE FEATS ON THEIR NEW BIG AERIAL RIGGING
The Famous BICKETT FAMILY
LADDER EXPERTS
The Marvelous Bickett Family
aerial wonders of the world
Will Give Four Big Free Acts Every Day

Another act was Ella K. Ewing, billed as the world's tallest woman.

Giantess is Coming!
Ella K. Ewing, the world's tallest woman will be on exhibition in a tent at the Fairbury Fair.
Come enjoy the Fair, Sept. 5 to 9, 1910



Ella Ewing with her parents.

Ella Katherine “Kate” Ewing, known as the “Missouri Giantess,” was widely regarded as the world’s tallest woman of her era, reportedly reaching more than eight feet in height as an adult. Born on March 9, 1872, in Missouri, she grew so rapidly that by her teens she was already far taller than those around her, and she eventually earned a living by appearing in fairs, expositions, and traveling shows across the country. Despite being exhibited because of her stature, she maintained a quiet life near her childhood home between tours and was remembered locally with respect and affection rather than ridicule. Ella Ewing died of tuberculosis on January 10, 1913, at the age of 40.

During Fair Week, one could see a show during the evenings at the Opera House per this Blade ad.

Central Opera House

Fair Week

Attractions

Tuesday, Sept. 6th

"St. Elmo"

Great Book Play, Prices 35, 50, 75, $1.00

Wednesday, Sept. 7th

"Paid in Full"

Melodrama, Prices 50, 75, $1.00

Thursday, Sept. 8th

"Isle of Spice"

Musical Comedy, Prices 50, 75, $1.00

Friday, Sept. 9th

"The Wolf"

Melodrama, Prices 50, 75, $1.00

Saturday, Sept. 10th

"The Vulture"

A Comedy, Prices 25, 35, 50, 75

This was the first fair that had auto racing. The Blade reported on the auto races.

> There was much controversy in the carded automobile race at ten miles. After protests and counter protests had been tossed about, it was at length decided to have two events, one for the touring cars and one for the runabouts. The heavier car event went to Claudon of Fairbury, driving a Stoddard-Dayton. He was accompanied by Travis as mechanic. The Moline quit in the second mile after it had been lapped by the winning machine. It looked for a time as if Claudon would lap the Cadillac, but its driver let out a little and it finished about three furlongs in the rear.
>
> The Halladay, which Goudy was to drive against Kuhn's Buick, with Morrison at the wheel, went lame and that event had to be called off.

This form of racing caused a great deal of interest and it is safe to say that the next Fairbury fair will have definite arrangements made to supply it.

14.
FAIR GROUND
MAKE YOUR ENTRIES FOR THE GREAT
FAIRBURY FAIR
"THE BIGGEST PUMPKIN TAKES THE PRIZE"
And don't forget while sseing the Great Show that there are many attraction which you should not overlook at Bethard's store.
Our Annual Cloak and Suit Bale, in which we give 10 per cent to carly buye will commence Monday and continue until September 17th, a positive saving all who will buy at this time. We also invite you to see our
New Dress Goods
New Shirt Waists
New Dress Skirts
New Silk Trimmings
New Fall Merchandise of all Kinds
We especially call your attention to the line of 50c Dress Goods shown in the window.

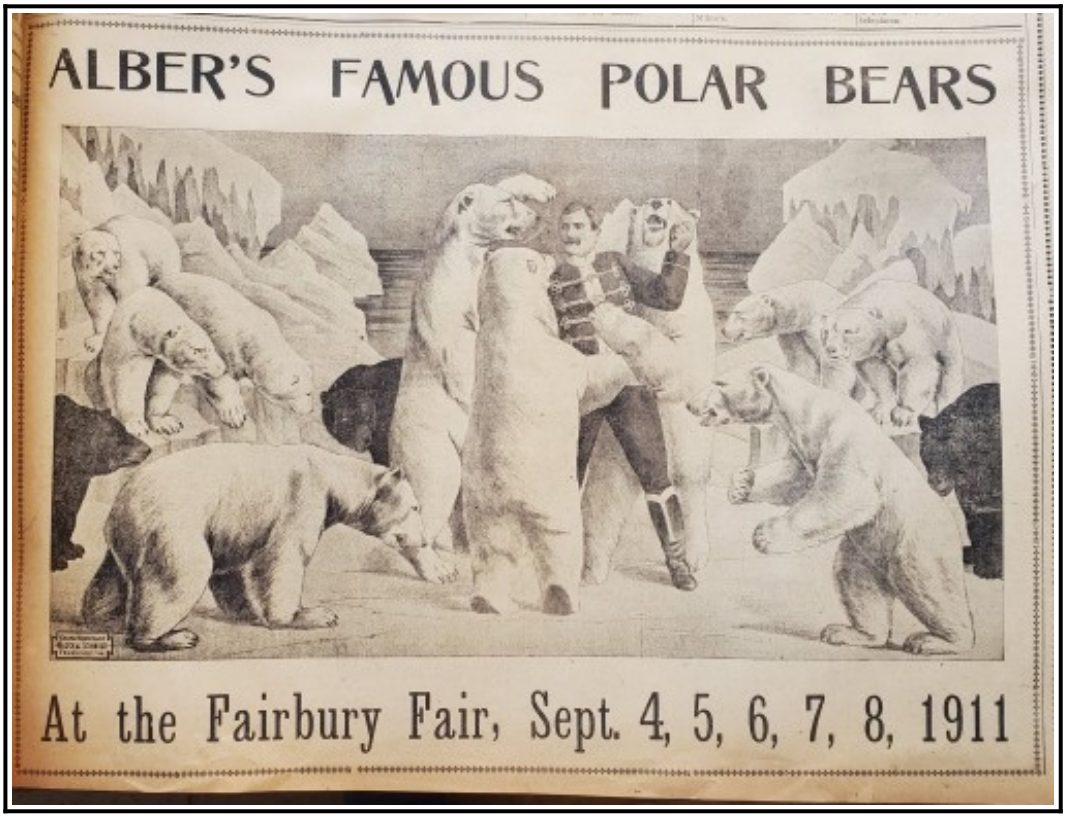
The 1910 Fairbury Fair also featured a largest pumpkin contest.

CHAPTER 6

1911 to 1920

1911

This fair was held on September 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The main act was Alber's Famous Polar Bears.



The Fairbury fair also contracted for a pilot to fly his biplane over the fair grounds during the fair.

> Mr. Lougheed is in the employ of the International Aeroplane Manufacturing company. He flies an International-Curtis biplane, manufactured by his company.

This was the first Fairbury fair to have motorcycle racing.

Motorcycle Race Today

The superintendent of speed has announced a ten mile motorcycle race for single cylinder motorcycles this afternoon and the air is full of gas and smelly vapors within seventeen blocks of the spot where the local enthusiasts are “tuning up” their boats. A big field is promised and some hair raising banking and volplaning will reward the crowd.

The Excelsior team composed of the two Goudies, Ramsey, and Wurzberger will endeavor to demonstrate the superiority of that make over the Harley-Davidson following, among who are Morrison, Hiday, Purdum, and Bradley. Carrithers on a Reading Standard will be among the entrants if his machine arrives from the factory in time. Several out of town riders have signified their intention of coming, and the “put-put” of the motor will be heard in the land to the delight of the followers of motors, spark plugs, and other perplexing topics.

Booker, the Leroy crack, is not here today, will be on hand with his fast Indian later in the week and make a hard try for the bacon. Although not definitely decided upon, it is understood that a race for doubles will be on the card for tomorrow, another for singles Thursday, and a free-for-all, nothing to bar, at fifteen miles for Friday.

Interest in this kind of racing is at its height in Fairbury and the people want to see something of this sort.

In this 1911 Blade article, “volplaning” is almost certainly borrowed from early aviation and means letting the machine glide or coast downhill or off the banking with the power cut or throttled back, creating a dramatic, diving run. Paired with “hair raising banking,” it suggests riders charging hard into the turns on the steeply **banked** track, then dropping or coasting down off the bank in a controlled, swooping glide that would look and feel risky to spectators of the time.

Fairbury natives Carl and William Goudy placed first and second in the motorcycle race held at this fair.

The Blade ran a lengthy column reviewing all the changes at the Fairbury fair over its first 36 years.

FAIRS THEN AND NOW

Many Changes in the Past Thirty-Six Years

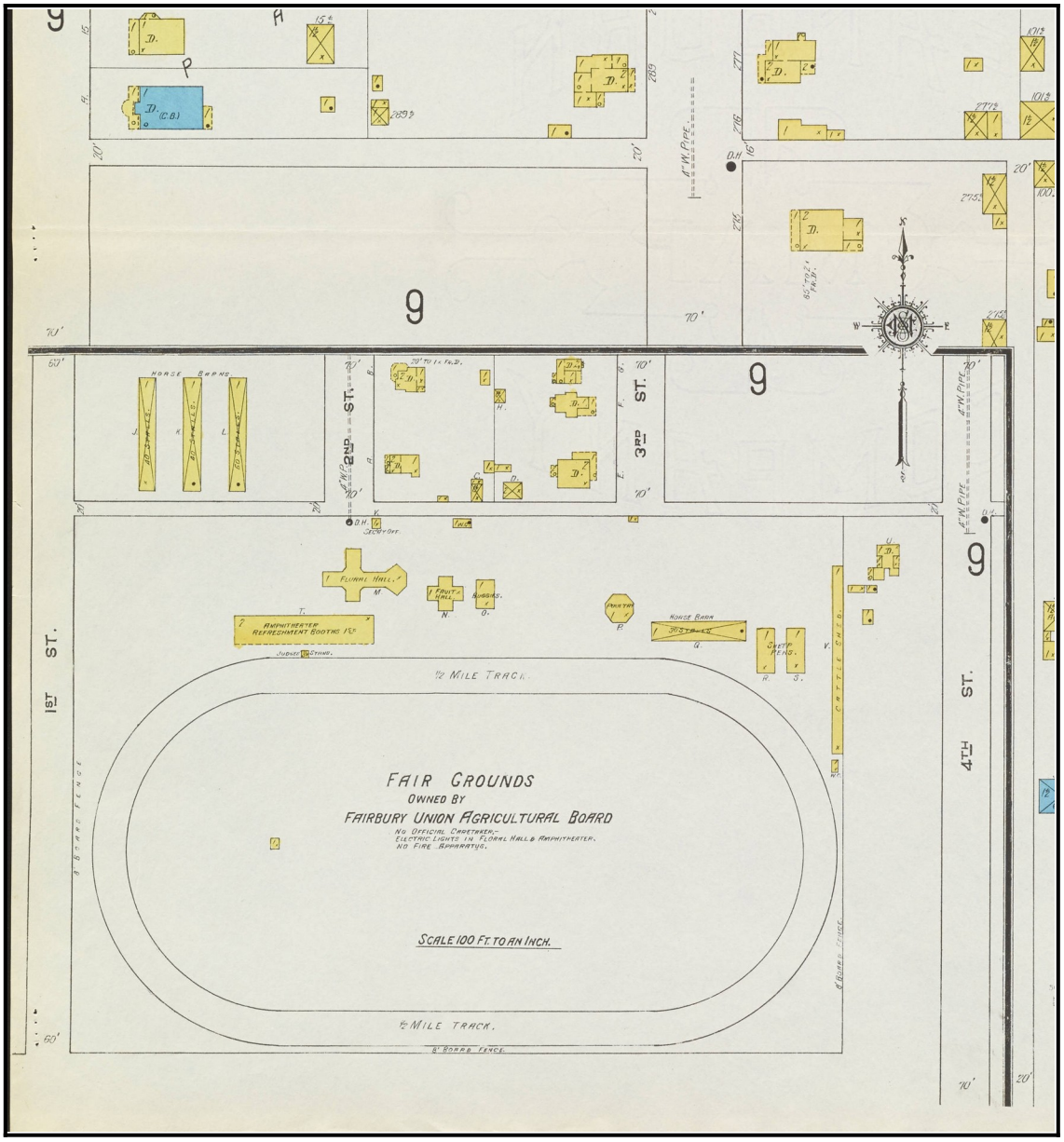
The thirty-fifth annual meeting of the Fairbury Union Agricultural Association, commonly known as the Fairbury fair, shows many changes since its inauguration in 1875. The old order has changed, and to a person who has not been here for a number of years, the grounds are hardly recognizable. The floral hall and the horticultural building are the only structures on the grounds that remain in their original location and even these have been remodeled so that they could hardly be called the same. In former years, the stalls for exhibiting horses and cattle extended along the west fence and along the north fence between First and Third streets. The racing stables were all in the northwest corner of the grounds. The place in the northwest corner which is at present used for parking of automobiles, has been added to the grounds in recent years. The pens for sheep and hogs were located east of the Third street entrance and in their place is now used as a paddock for the east section of the speed horses barns. Implement exhibits have grown enormously in the last few years and have taken all the ground between the poultry shed and the horticultural building. The infield was at one time spoiled by clumps of trees, but these have been removed and a clear view of the track is obtained all the way. Improvement has been the watchword of the association, and hardly a fair has passed without some change for the better being noted.

A number of the original directors and officials of the fair are still in active touch with the fair, and they have worked hard with the younger officials so that the Fairbury fair has grown bigger and better, instead of going down and out as so many county fairs have done.

Ben Cumpston, E. W. Mahoney, A. H. Remington and others have been connected with the fair for years and deserve much praise for their earnest and loyal labor in building it up. Hugh Robinson, Steven Herr, Joel Strawn, T. A. Beach, J. J. Virgin, Ed Phillips, Smith Olney, Dan Potter, Emory Gregg, G. B. Gordon and O. S. Westervelt are numbered among the old time directors and officials. In the old days, competition in the classes of cattle, hogs, horses, sheep, and poultry were much heavier than now, but they did not have the big free attractions, the racing, or the activity in other lines that they have today. It was not uncommon several decades ago to have hundreds of horses and cattle entered in those respective classes. In one “big” year, one breeder alone had a herd of 75 head of cattle on exhibition. In 1893, the fair was not conducted, but the following year is spoken of by the old generation as one of the banner years. J. J. Virgin was president and Smith Olney was secretary of the first meeting.

1911 Sanborn Insurance Map

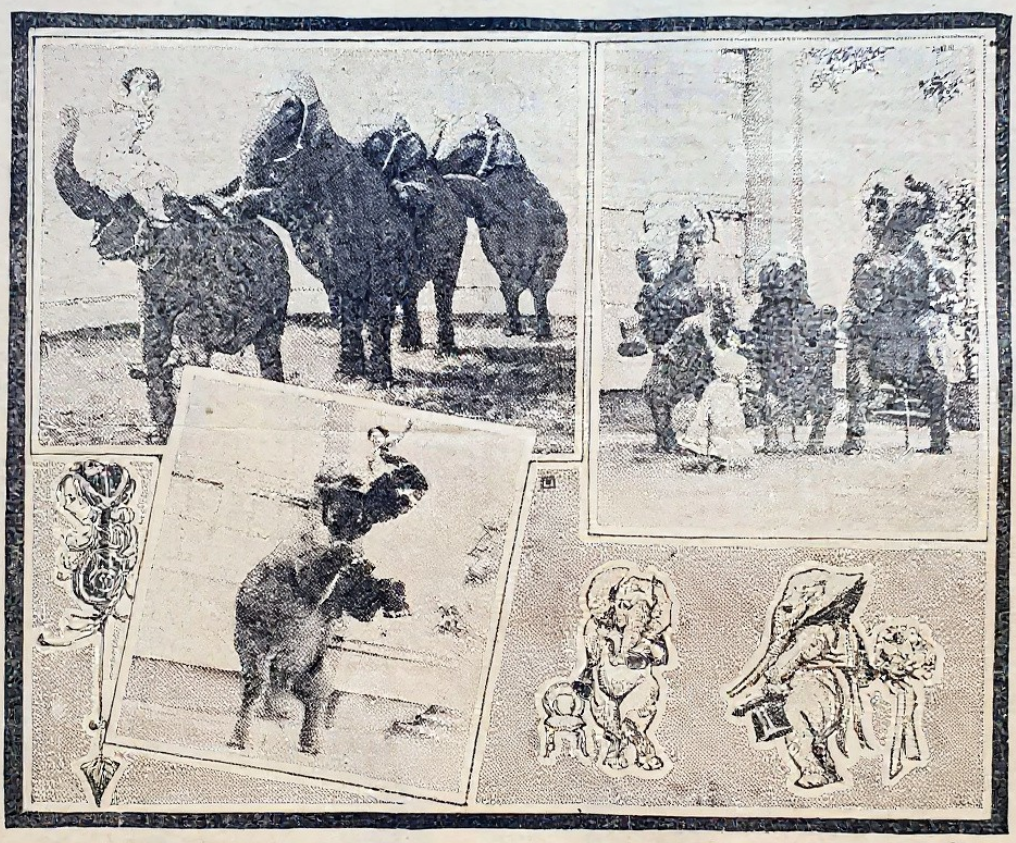
Note the horse stalls in the northwest corner of the fairgrounds.



1912

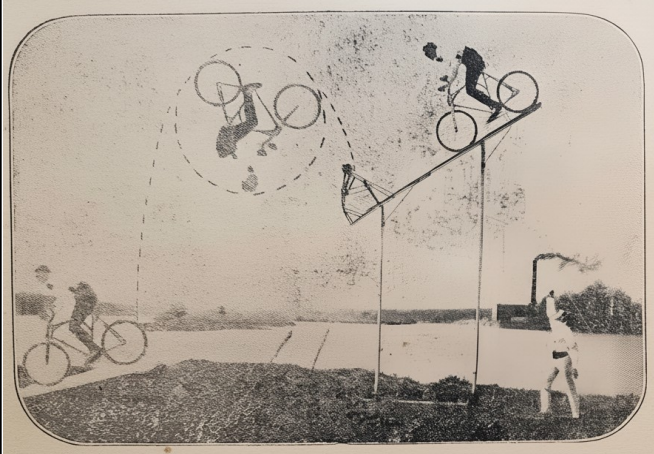
This fair was held on September 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

This fair had three major acts. The first was the musical elephants. The second act was the Ranellos, a couple who performed bicycle stunts. The third act was the Mars Duo, trapeze artists. This fair also featured motorcycle racing. On Wednesday, the race was for stock single cylinder motorcycles and was call the Mail Carrier's Special. Thursday's race included a Single Cylinder Stock class and a Twin Cylinder Stock class. Friday's race was a Free-for-All race.



Musical Elephants

Four performing elephants have been secured by the Fair management and they will be seen twice daily in front of the grand stand. Don't miss this great act.



The Ranellos

This celebrated couple have toured the world over and exhibited before the crowned heads of Europe. For the past year they have been giving their act in the largest cities of America and they do two acts that are not even attempted by other cyclists. One of their acts is looping the loop without a loop, another, and the most marvelous is riding a unicycle, 3 wheels, one on top of the other. It is a wonderful act.

THE MARS DUO

Artists of great repute, will give three separate and distinct performances on the trapeze and slack wizc. Also a great athletie exhibition. . . . .

20 Burch's Big Band 20

One of the features of the fair will be the musical program given each day by Burch's Big Band of 20 celebrated musicians. It will be the largest and best band ever seen and heard on the grounds.

Motorcycle, Singles, Five Miles

C. Goudy, Excellsior 3

W. Goudy, Excellsior 2

Allen, Harley Davidson 1

Free-for-all—Ten Miles.

C. Goudy, Excellsior 1

W. Goudy, Excellsior 3

Allen, Harley Davidson 2

L. Dirk ....

Dirk, Excellsior 4

The Goudy brothers did well in the 1912 Fairbury fair motorcycle races.

MOTORCYCLE RACES

The Management of the fair have decided to add motorcycle racing to the program and offer $300.00 in purses for racing Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. There will be no long drawn out twenty mile races, but races short, snappy and swift.

This was the first Fairbury fair to mention the availability of gasoline versus steam powered farm tractors.

> In these days of tremendous advancement in machinery, the tendency seems to be toward the use of gasoline for motive power. In accordance with the trend of the times, Fairbanks Morse & Co have built a large gasoline traction engine. This monster is on show at the fair ground now. It is as large as the old steam machines, and is rated to develop twenty-five horsepower.

1916

The Blade bound books for the years 1913, 1914, and 1915 are lost.

In August of 1976, the Blade published a photo of women in an old car who attended the circa 1914 Fairbury Fair. The photo was colorized by Fotor.com and is shown below.

Hi!

Ho! Come to the Fair

SEVERAL WOMEN WHO attended the Fairbury Fair in about 1914 were seated, left to right, Mrs. J.E. (Edith) Lewis, Mrs. Ed (Edith) Agard, Mrs. A.B. (Alice) Claudon, Mrs. S.J. (Carrie) Perlee, Mrs. J.W. (Della) Walton, Sr., all of Fairbury; Miss Gentzer, Ottawa; and Mrs. N.M. (Ora) Otis, Fairbury.Standing in front of the car are, left to right, Mrs. A.C. (Emma) Bartlett, Mrs. H.J. (Sade) Ramsey, Mrs. C.A. (Anita) Purdum, all of Fairbury; Mrs. Gertrude Harmont, Onarga; Mrs. H.B. (Emma) Taylor and Mrs. W.H. (Rose) Bartlett, Sr., both of Fairbury.

This photo was loaned to The Blade by C.F. Ahlstrom of rural Fairbury.

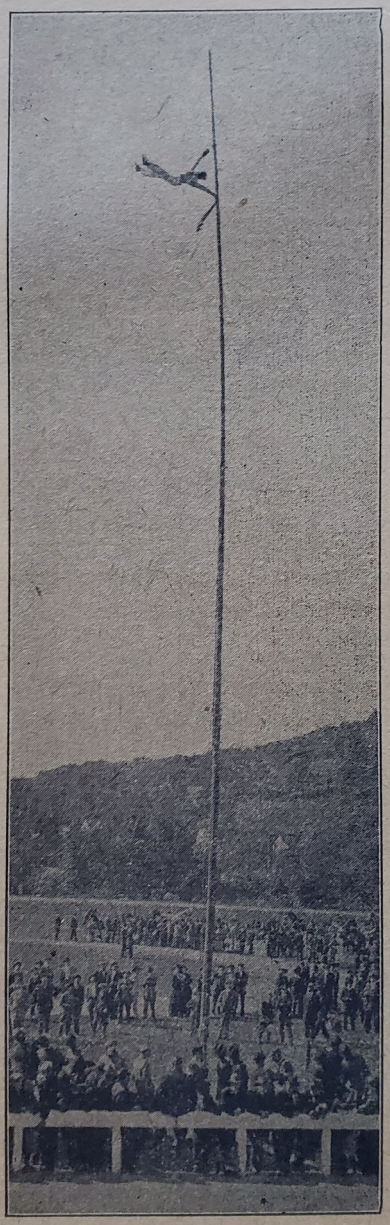
The 1916 Fairbury fair was held on August 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25. Hiett B. Taylor was President and N. W. Fulton was Secretary. This must have been a very successful year for the Fairbury fair because attendance was over 10,000 people on Thursday.

The 1916 Fairbury fair featured many different kinds of acts as described by the Blade.

> The free attractions this year are six in number and are the best that can be secured. Among them is the wonderful De Carno, who performs wonderful feats on a pole 100 feet in the air. The four Casters, an original routine of casting and aerial feats. The Ishkihawa Japs, the recognized peer of all Japanese acts, direct from the New York Hippodrome. Andrews & Andrews in feats of strength,

balancing, and boxing. Taking them all in all the free acts will be the best ever given at a Fairbury fair.

THE WONDERFUL DECARNO



The world's famous acrobat working 100 feet in the air. This is one of the free thrillers at the Fairbury Fair, August 21 to 25.

The P. & O. Band

30 Pieces--The Best Band in the State

Band Concerts Every Day

Free Acts Daily

turn triple selfies T bars. other acrobats ever attempt this. They great and you will say so.

THE ISHKIHAWA JAPS

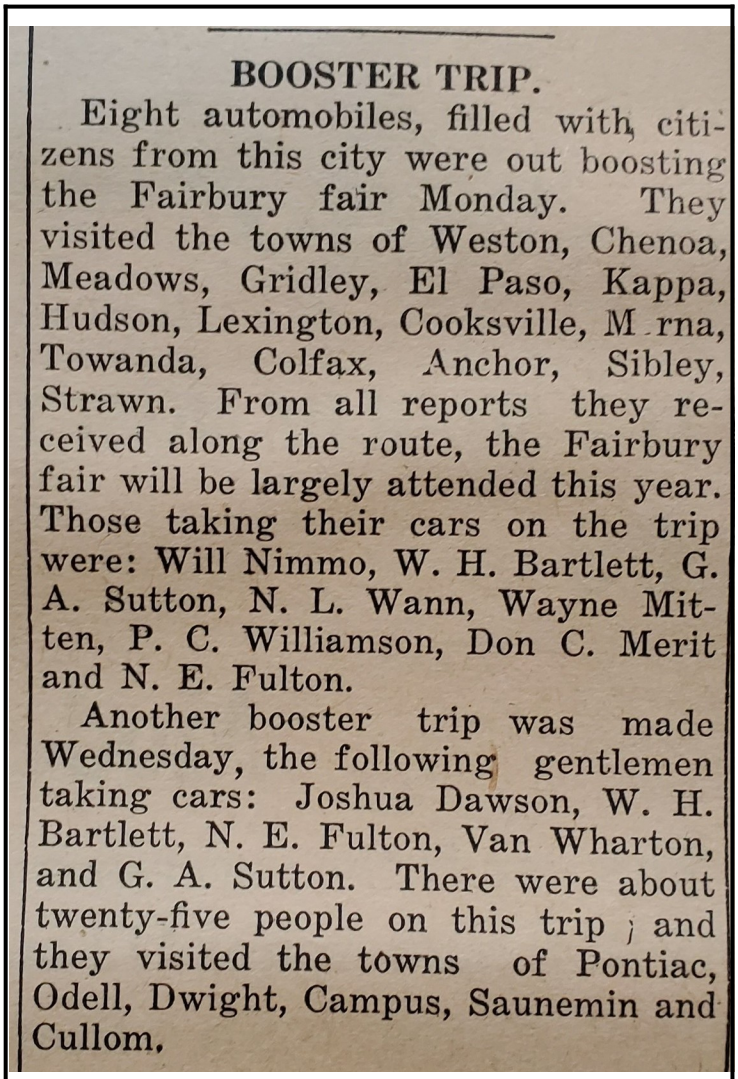
The recognized pere of all Japanese acts direct from the New York Hippodrome. These agile performers are the ones all other Japanese acts are copied after and they are undoubtedly the best ever seen at a country fair.

Andrews & Andrews

Balancing, Boxing feats of strength and agility far beyond the average. They will keep you interested every minute and you will enjoy seeing them. There are none better and you will say so.

Come to the Fair. A Week of Recreation and Pleasure

Although this 1916 photograph is of relatively poor quality, it does show the same grandstands as used today.



BOOSTER TRIP.

Eight automobiles, filled with citizens from this city were out boosting the Fairbury fair Monday. They visited the towns of Weston, Chenoa, Meadows, Gridley, El Paso, Kappa, Hudson, Lexington, Cooksville, M rna, Towanda, Colfax, Anchor, Sibley, Strawn. From all reports they received along the route, the Fairbury fair will be largely attended this year. Those taking their cars on the trip were: Will Nimmo, W. H. Bartlett, G. A. Sutton, N. L. Wann, Wayne Mitten, P. C. Williamson, Don C. Merit and N. E. Fulton.

Another booster trip was made Wednesday, the following gentlemen taking cars: Joshua Dawson, W. H. Bartlett, N. E. Fulton, Van Wharton, and G. A. Sutton. There were about twenty-five people on this trip ; and they visited the towns of Pontiac, Odell, Dwight, Campus, Saunemin and Cullom.

Fairbury citizens used their automobiles to promote the Fairbury fair to nearby towns.

1917

This fair was held on August 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31. There were not any featured performers. The Fairbury fair contracted with the Great American Shows to provide many booths as well as a merry-go-round and a large Ferris wheel.

One unique feature of this fair was that a drawing was used to award a free Ford automobile to a fair goer per the Blade.

> The drawing for the Ford automobile, which was given away by the Pontiac Motor Car company, was held from the judge's stand at four o'clock, Marshall N. T. Graves conducting the drawing, and Maurice Herzog pulling the number out of a bushel basket.
>
> The first number drawn was 858, and belonged to George W. Hoffman, who works on a farm west of town. Mr. Hoffman was busy threshing Friday afternoon, however, and was not present. One of the requirements was that the person holding the number drawn had to be on the grounds.
>
> The next number drawn was 1281. This number belonged to Mrs. E. H. Lyle. Mrs. Lyle was present and within a second or two was right up in the stand comparing her number with the one drawn, and acknowledging the hearty applause she received.

The automobile races were again a popular event.

> Friday, the last day of the fair, was well attended, and the automobile races furnished some excellent sport for the people. The first race was a five mile-affair and was won by Howard "Zeke" Lighty, of Forrest, in 8:58½. John Schmidt was second and Lester Pierson third. Pete Ely was out of this race early in the game when he lost a part of a bearing off of his machine. He, however, won the next event, a ten-mile race, in 14:22, with Lighty second and Schmidt third. The third event was a five-mile race, which Schmidt won in 8:58. Ely was second and Pierson third. The pretty race of the whole afternoon was the pursuit race, which was won by Schmidt. The four contestants were started an eighth of a mile apart, each man being eliminated when another man passed him. The contest lasted until they had gone eleven miles, when Schmidt, who had driven a pretty race, overtook Ely.

1919

The 1918 Blade bound book is lost. The 1919 Fairbury Fair was held on September 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The main attractions were provided by the Mrs. Nat Reis Carnival Company which brought their equipment to Fairbury using 18 railroad cars.

Some of the free acts included Hornbrook's Congress Wild West Riders, Hill's Society Circus, Dare Devil Harry Rich 110 feet up with Capt. Grant Watkins Balloon Ascensions daily.

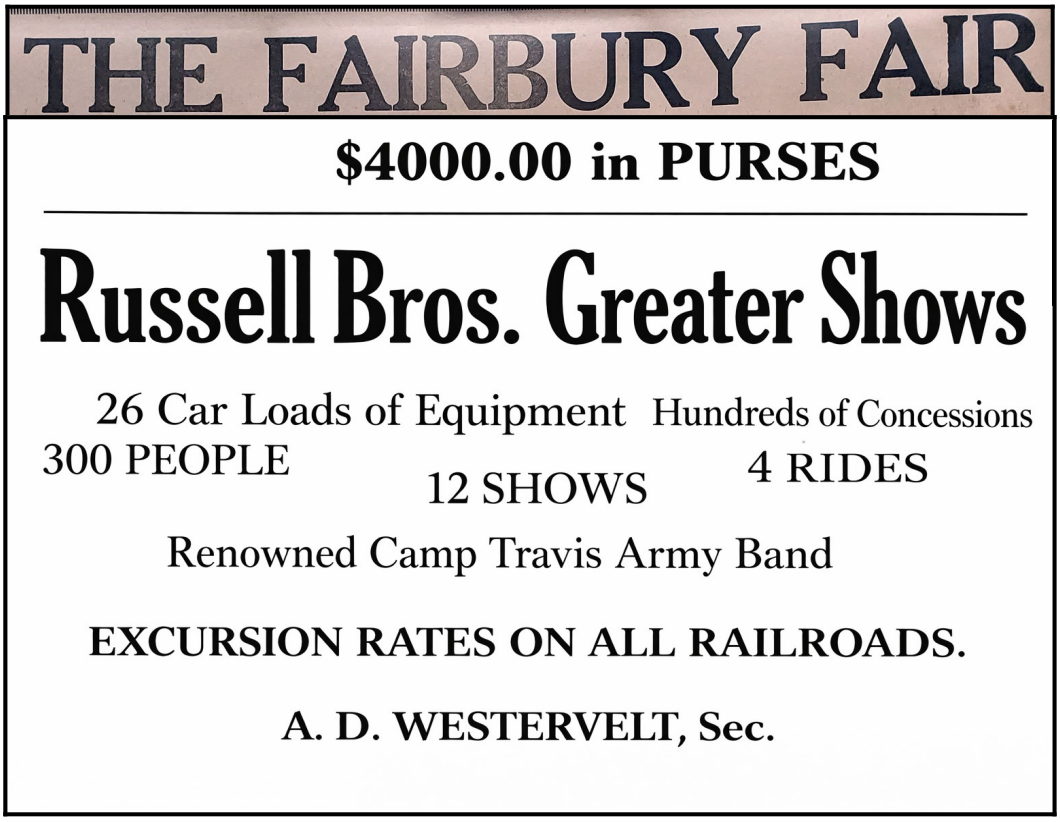
There were also six auto races with professional drivers. The Blade noted the Fairbury fair received one of the nicest donations ever from plumber C. B. Day.

> One of the nicest donations ever made to the Fairbury fair is the drinking fountain which was donated by C. B. Day. The fountain is complete in every respect. There are bubbling fountains for the little folks to get a drink as well as the grown-ups, and there are also several places where water can be drawn in buckets.
>
> The fountain is not only one of convenience, but it is also a pretty nice piece of work, being made of concrete and covered with stucco. The fountain is also protected by a roof, which was also donated by Mr. Day. The generosity of this enterprising firm speaks much for them.

As of 2026, the drinking fountain donated by C. B. Day still stands on the fairgrounds. The label is faded but says “C. B. Day – Plumbing – Heating.”

1920

This fair was held on August 30, September 1, 2, 3, and 4. It was an extremely popular fair with Thursday attendance being over 20,000 people. The Fairbury fair contracted with Russell Bros. To provide entertainment booths and rides. They required 26 train cars to transport their equipment to the Fairbury fair.



There were also six auto races at the 1920 Fairbury fair. Airplane exhibitions were also conducted at this Fairbury fair per the Blade.

> The Caldwell Brothers Aerial Company of Galesburg, Illinois, will put on airplane exhibitions twice each day. They will also engage in passenger carrying service affording visitors at the Fairbury Fair a fine opportunity to take a flight in the air with a skilled pilot and in a reliable machine.

The highlight of the year for most Fairbury children was the Fairbury fair. The Blade published a story about a young man who could not wait for the fair to start.

THE CAMELS ARE COMING – TOMORROW IS CIRCUS DAY

One eager youngster, who for two long weeks has been counting the days until the circus arrives, expressed the sentiments of all the kids and the most of the grownups when he said “just one more day and the lions will be roaring, the tigers whooping and the elephants and camels will be here. Oh Boy.” He has exacted a binding promise from his mother to call him at 4 a. m., Saturday, so he can go down and see them unload and it is likely he will have plenty of company who will not only watch them unload, but will follow them right down to the circus grounds to watch the fascinating work of the circus hands performing their innumerable tasks without any unusual rush and no wasted energy.

The posters and press notices have been carefully read and now we are all ready for the real thrills, the big parade, the good old circus band, the flocks of clowns, steam calliope and everything that makes a circus one of the days of real sport.

CHAPTER 7

1921 to 1925

1921

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The Blade reported there were four big acts at this fair.

THE FLORIDA FOUR

Four colored men, comedy harmony jubilee singers. This is the greatest colored quartette appearing at outdoor events, and they positively create a furore wherever they appear. They sing a medley of all the old and the latest and most popular songs of the day. Their comedy is bright, new and up-to-the minute. They are singers and dancers of the highest class.

THE GREAT VULCANO

Sensational juggling and equilibristic act. Vulcano is positively the twentieth century wonder, as he performs feats of equilibrium never before attempted by the ordinary gymnast. He introduces the following tricks: Balancing a lady by his teeth while ascending a pair of stairs may not seem to be such a perilous piece of business, but if you will try it, it will be a different matter and Vulcano extends the invitation to anyone in the audience who may wish to take a chance in trying this great feat. He also balances and spins a motorcycle in action, in mid-air, a lady riding same; this great feat is also accomplished by his teeth.

LIONEL LEGARE

He will give a wonderful spiral tower exhibition, ascending and descending the narrow roadway reaching far upwards, 110 feet above his starting place, while balancing on a large globe 26 inches in diameter, in every conceivable way — forward, backward, sideways, etc., all the time propelling the globe with his feet and using no balancing pole.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WONDERS

The cart before the horse, a novel exhibition. Record time for this stunt half mile in 1:28¼. Maxine R. and King B., driven reinless, will race one half mile each day. Then there are clown racers, a novel attraction, a real race with a thrilling finish.

The Blade reported the following ticket prices:

$0	Children admitted free when accompanied by parent/guardian
$0.75	Season ticket for children.
$2	Season ticket for adults.
$0.75	Season ticket for autos.

1922

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The free acts included the Pallone Trio, the O'Kuras, the Cleora Miller Trio, the Flying Fishers, and Smith's Animal Circus.

The 1922 Fair also featured three gorgeous fireworks pageants by Gordon's Fire Works. The S. W. Brundage Shows provided 12 shows, four rides, two bands, and a calliope. There were also auto races and horseshoe contests.

The 1922 Blade ad was so faded that it was almost illegible. ChatGPT AI was used to recreate the ad and colorize it.

1923

This fair was held on September 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Attractions included a fireworks pageant, four days of harness racing, and the Great Patterson Shows. The attractions also included acts that performed at the Illinois State Fair. These State Fair acts included the Flying Valentinos of Ringling Circus fame, the Fisher Sisters, whirling human tops, the three Casey Boys acrobats and Thalero's Great Animal Circus.

This fair also included automobile racing with a $750 in prices. This amount would be equivalent to $14,500 in today's dollars.

1924

This fair was held on September 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

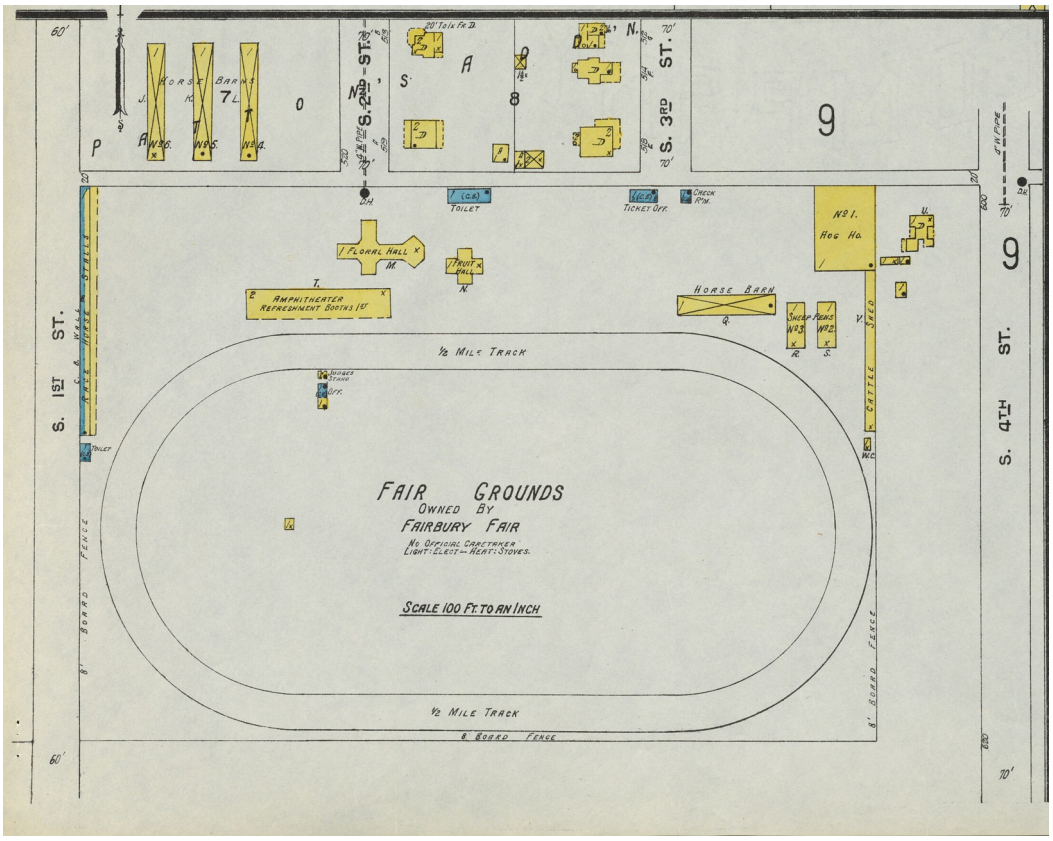
Free Acts
State Fair Attractions
Flying Floyds—Supreme Aerial Artists
The Camille Trio—Acrobatic Buffoons
Captain Pickard's Educated Seals
GUNPOWDER & CO.—TNT of Comedy Mule Acts
Ching Ling Foo Troupe of Famous Chinese Athletes

Blade ad for the featured acts of the 1924 Fair.

This fair also featured automobile racing on Saturday with $750 in total prizes.

1924 Sanborn Map

Note the horse barns running north and south along First Street.



1924 Sanborn Map showing fairgrounds and 1st Street.

1925

This fair was held on September 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. This was the 50th Fairbury Fair so it was advertised as the Golden Jubilee. The Blade dedicated many photos and articles about the first 50 years of the Fairbury Fair. This fair featured 7 free acts. It also included automobile and horse racing.

7 Big Free Acts 7
The Premier Vaudeville Entertainers of the World — Sensational, Awe-Inspiring. Asaw Elephants, Giant Pachyderm Entertainers. Casting Lamys, Prince Nelson, Lohse & Sterling, Bolduc, Torcat.
All of State Fair Calibre
TWICE DAILY
Afternoon Evening

The Blade published an article about the various people involved with the Fairbury Fair the first 50 years of its existence.

WHO'S WHO IN HISTORY OF THE FAIRBURY FAIR

Following are a list of officers of the Fairbury fair for the past fifty years. The fair was organized January 26, 1876, with the following officers:

Pres. — John Virgin.
Vice Pres. — John G. Steers.
Sec. — Smith Olney.
Treas. — C. C. Bartlett.

Directors — John Virgin, John G. Steers, Smith Olney, C. C. Bartlett, Henry Skinner, Owen Finnegan, Geo. Myers, Stephen Herr, D. R. Potter, Robert Elmore, John F. Myers, W. E. Norman, D. L. Murdock, Benjamin Cumpston, J. W. Baily, J. F. Earnheart, Henry Kingman.

Mr. Virgin served two years as president of the fair, then R. C. Straight was elected president, with Henry Skinner vice president; H. L. Barnes, secretary, and L. B. Dominy, treasurer.

In December, 1886, at the annual election the following officers were elected: Pres., R. C. Straight, re-elected; Vice Pres., John Zimmerman; Treasurer, L. B. Dominy. Sec., C. E. Carter. They were all re-elected in 1887.

In 1888 at the annual meeting the same officers were elected, with the exception of John Zimmerman, T. A. Beach taking his place. Although Mr. Carter was elected secretary, he later resigned, and E. W. Wilson acted as secretary for the fair of 1889.

At the annual meeting in December, 1889, T. S. O. McDowell was elected secretary, and the other old officers re-elected.

After ten years service, R. C. Straight retired as president of the Fairbury Union Agricultural Board, and at the annual meeting T. A. Beach was elected president, with Hugh Robington vice president; L. B. Dominy was re-elected treasurer, and John V. McDowell was elected secretary. The directors elected at this meeting for two years were Stephen Herr, J. R. Strawn, S. L. Conine, G. S. Scriven, John Mapel, James H. Odell. The old officers were re-elected in 1891, together with the following directors, who were also re-elected: Ben Cumpston, E. W. Mahoney, F. M. Eads, J. W. McDowell, S. M. Barnes, J. G. Steers, John Zimmerman.

At the December meeting in 1892 the old officers were re-elected. On account of the world's fair in Chicago in 1893 there was considerable discussion as to whether Fairbury should hold a fair next fall, it being finally decided to hold the fair as usual. Later this was reconsidered and it was decided not to hold the fair.

The old officers were all re-elected at the December meeting in 1893 for the ensuing year. The same officers were again elected in 1894, and served until 1896, when R. C. Straight, who had previously served as president, was re-elected, with O. S. Westervelt as secretary; D. F. Kelso, assistant secretary, and Charles Merit, second assistant secretary.

At the December meeting in 1897, Dr. S. M. Barnes was elected president, Joel Strawn, vice president, and L. B. Dominy and O. S. Westervelt were elected treasurer and secretary respectively.

The old officers were re-elected for the fair of 1899, with the exception that J. W. Walton was elected vice president, and F. L. Churchill was elected as a new director.

At the annual December meeting in 1899, R. C. Straight, who on two previous occasions had served as president, was again elected to that office and A. D. Westervelt was elected secretary. J. R. Strawn and L. B. Dominy were retained in the offices of vice president and treasurer, respectively.

J. W. McDowell was elected president at the annual meeting in 1900. The remaining old officers were re-elected.

M. M. Jacobs was elected secretary in 1901, and F. M. Eads was elected vice president.

The only change in officers in 1902 was that of treasurer, W. R. Bane being elected treasurer to fill the vacancy caused by the death of L. B. Dominy.

In 1903, F. F. Brydia was elected secretary for the 1904 fair, this being the only change in officers.

The officials elected in December were: Pres., J. W. McDowell (re-elected); Vice Pres., G. S. Scriven; Treas., T. S. O. McDowell; Sec., F. F. Brydia (re-elected.)

The outgoing officers for the year 1904 were re-elected for the year 1905.

At the annual meeting held in December, 1905, H. B. Taylor was elected president; G. S. Scriven, vice president; G. B. Gordon, secretary, and J. W. Walton, Jr., treasurer. The directors elected were: Benj. Cumpston, W. H. Bartlett, J. W. Walton, Sr., A. F. Filley, T. A. Beach, J. W. McDowell, E. W. Mahoney. The hold-over directors were: John Mapel, P. C. James, F. L. Churchill, N. E. Fulton, A. H. Remington.

The same officers were elected in 1906, and again at the annual meeting in 1907, with the exception that J. W. Walton, Sr., was elected vice president. These officers continued to head the fair till 1915, when N. E. Fulton was elected secretary and J. W. Walton, Jr., was re-elected treasurer, W. R. Bane having taken the latter's place in 1913-14. These officers continued to head the fair until 1918.

In 1918 the fair was re-organized with the following officers and directors. Pres., Nimrod Mapel; Sec., E. W. Powers; Treas., G. Y. McDowell; directors (one year)—Nimrod Mapel, Jack Thompson, J. C. Hagen, F. E.Meharry, N. T. Graves, E. R. Stoutemeyer; (two-year term), Herbert Powell, W. S. Ramsey, Chris Brandt, F. S. Corkhill, J. W. Walsh, W. B. Henline. (three-year term) J. L. Vawter, John C. Meis, A. B. Cladon, Jr., G. Y. McDowell.

In 1919 the old officers were re-elected, with Jack Thompson as vice president. These officials were in office until 1922 when Jack Thompson was elected president; Herbert Powell, vice president; A. B. Claudon, Jr., treasurer; and E. W. Powers was re-elected secretary. These officers are still at the head of the fair with the exception of E. W. Powers, who resigned, his place being filled by R. J. Phillips.

E. W. POWERS
Served as Secretary from 1918 to 1924. Much of the success of the fair during that time was due to his untiring efforts in its behalf.

J. C. HAGEN
Supt. of Speed for the past seven yrs.

The Blade ran another article about the Golden Jubilee Fairbury Fair.

"GOLDEN JUBILEE" FAIR
STARTS LABOR DAY

Exhibits to Exceed All Previous Years
Entertainment of All Kinds.

A monster Labor day celebration will open the Golden Jubilee exposition of the Fairbury fair this year. The varied program arranged will eclipse all previous years and will hold sway for six full days and nights.

The Labor Day exhibition promises to be the biggest event in central Illinois. Two grand stake races with large entries of the best horses, and purses totaling over $1,200, will provide an afternoon of high class racing.

Starting at nine o'clock in the forenoon a state wide horseshoe tournament will be staged featuring the very best pitchers in the country, among them the former

world's champion, Jackson. $250 in purses are offered as regular prizes, with nickel-plated, copper and other special shoes put up as feature prizes. The man to pitch the most ringers in the finals will be awarded the shiny, nickel-plated shoes and so on through the list for the other specials.

The Forrest Municipal Band will provide high class music afternoon and evening. Popular numbers will float out over the beautiful fair grounds, contributing their part to a day and night of happy amusement.

Seven big Free Acts, the very best obtainable, will perform both day and night. Sensational stunts of all kinds, tumbling, apparatus, tight rope walking; six famous saxophonists rendering peppy, penetrating, maddening jazz; the ponderous Asaw elephants will cavort through their almost humanly clever stunts with astonishing grace; Torcat will bring his trained roosters, the only act of its kind in America, and serve up stellar amusement for both the young and old. The very best in hippodrome and vaudeville entertainment, is the only way to express it.

A special feature of the night fair will be the famous movie, "Racing Luck," staged by E. B. Ramsey, across from the amphitheatre. Judging of light horses and equestrainship will also take place this evening in front of the grandstand.

The D. D. Murphy Carnival Shows will be in full swing all day. The blazing Midway will provide countless enjoyments in the way of thrilling rides, entertaining shows, etc. Thirty cars, 300 entertainers

Dancing every night to the best of music, furnished by Cleatus Clobes, of Bloomington, and Harry Ryan, of Lincoln, will serve to cap off each of the complete days of solid entertainment and amusement.

The entry list for the horse racing shows that the fine racing program that the patrons of the Fairbury fair have enjoyed for a number of years past will be repeated this year. Every race will be full to overflowing. Supt. of Speed Hagen states that the probabilities are that on account of the large entries, some of the races may have to be run in two divisions.

Additional Acts During Week.

Three great fireworks pageants will provide sterling entertainment Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights. Grand set pieces, mechanical devices and wonderful arrangements in fire will be set off by a special agent of the Thearle-Duffield company, largest fireworks company in the world. One hundred eighty displays in fire.

On Saturday, the 12th, the fastest cars and most daring drivers in the central west will defy death at every turn of the fine half mile track at the fair grounds. Tearing, skidding, shooting, these premier drivers will strive for victory and the

big purses offered. The starter's gun at 1:15 will open the most thrilling auto races in central Illinois.

Golden Jubilee will be a fact as well as a phrase this year at the Fairbury Fair. All will be treated to a most satisfying program of varied entertainment.

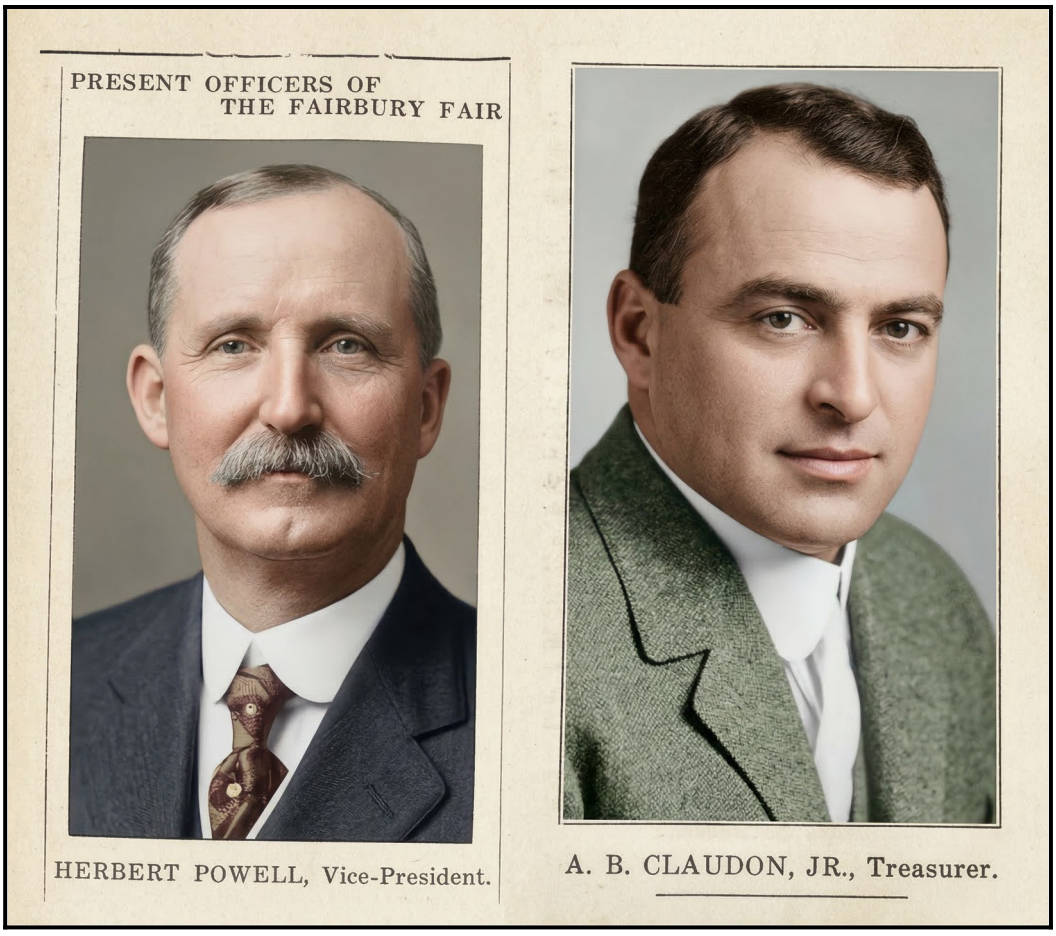
Six days and six nights replete with fun and amusement.

D. D. Murphy Shows.

Ladies and children constitute a large percentage of the attendance at fairs. This fact is conceded by fair secretaries and the question of their entertainment is one of the problems of fair administration.

Several of the attractions of this noted amusement organization have been designed solely for the entertainment of ladies and children, foremost among them being Watkins Dog and Pony Hippodrome, which will be a never-ending source of delight to the kiddies. The act consists of 15 beautiful Shetland ponies who have been trained to drill with the precision of soldiers. They form groups, pyramids, fire cannon; in fact, execute the most amazing routine ever seen by trained domestic animals. In addition to this group of equine wonders is a troupe of dogs and monkeys whose funny antics keep the children in a roar of laughter. A feature of the exhibition is the appearance of "Mascot," the pony with the human brain, said to have a mentality equal to that of a 12 year old child. This pony has been taught to multiply with ease. He even handles a cash register, recording sales and making change with the accuracy of a salesman and at the command of the trainer goes to bed, covering himself up awaiting the call for dinner.

Another attraction that will be enjoyed by children and grown-ups alike is Harvey's Monkey Racers where monkey pilots race tiny autos around an electrified track.



The 1925 Blade also ran a story by N. E. Fulton titled “Some Early Sketches of Fairbury and the Fair – Backward, Turn Backward, O Time in Thy Flight!”

When one’s thoughts are turned backward over a period of fifty years or more, long forgotten pictures appear on memory’s screen of life. Dim and indistinct in the earlier periods but as the focus shortens by years of childhood to youth the pictures become sharp and defined. Faces, incidents and scenes go through the mind, not always in regular sequence; years of the past will hop over years of the future and make a jumble of dates of events to be straightened out by a mind more methodical and less liable to err. The chief aim of this story is to give the present generation an idea of the early days of Fairbury and a sketchy history of the Fairbury Fair. If there are mixed dates or omissions we will here and now plead ignorance for the first and your pardon for the second.

In taking a moving picture one camera man will take the picture from one angle and another from another angle and when the two reels are developed the pictures, while containing the same characteristics and scenery, will look altogether different. There were, perhaps, two or three hundred youthful minds taking reels of pictures of Fairbury at the same time the reel about to be shown was taken and probably no two of them are alike. Therefore, please temper your judgment with mercy when you pick out the flaws.

If you can, just imagine a town which was being built upon a very swampy piece of land. The more you can imagine swamp the more natural the picture of early Fairbury. There were board walks all over town where there were any houses and most of the walks in the center of the city were up on stilts from three to four feet.

There was no drainage except two open ditches, one along the railroad track and one along Ash street. When it rained hard the sidewalks floated around town until the flood subsided, then they were re-anchored. The "kids" had great times those days boat riding.

To give a correct idea of general conditions at the opening of the fair it is well to tell of a few conveniences the people did not have for the reason they were not in existence. There were no wires in the town as telephones and electric lights were undreamed of. The only flying machine known to the children of that period was that of Darius Green and that wasn't very much of a success. There were few cellars and those that were under houses had a habit of filling up with water to the floor of the house three or four times a year. The first heating plants were put in ten years later and until that time everyone had stoves which were moved out in the spring and put back in the fall.

The men and boys all wore boots, some kid and some cow hide. The women wore bustles and dresses with trails. Their hair was their crowning glory. The girls all wore "pigtails," some one and some two braids, hanging down their back. Their dresses came down to their instep. There were no bobbed haired girls and if they rolled their stockings no one knew it. There were no Valentinos among the boys and balloon pants would have brought onto their wearer something more than a laugh. Red topped boots with copper toes were the mode among the boys and they wore their hair standing most of the time. There were no automobiles but they would have been of but little use, as they never could have pulled through the deep mud, and when it wasn't muddy the dust was a foot deep on all roads.

Reel 1. Date, the Day Before the First Fair.

Scene 1. The Village of Fairbury. The picture starts at the east end and runs through Main street to the west end. A flicker on the screen, a corner of the east elevator shows then across the railroad track are two frame square front store buildings. The one on the south is T. F. Kiff's store and the other Gorbach's furniture emporium with Mr. Gorbach in the doorway; the top of the old woolen mill with its brick stack is seen beyond the stores. The scene shifts to Main street showing first the Amsbary & Jones' elevator and across the street north their office and their grocery store just east; then Jake Thornton's small confectionery. In front of the Amsbary & Jones office is sitting a little rolly polly man with a mustache and goatee. It is the noted Bruce Amsbary. He is in animated conversation with several men. It is hard to distinguish who they are at this distance. Oh, yes, one is Sol Baker, another Bill Sype, one is George Scriven and another Dave Wright. Inside the office can be seen Ed Anable working on the books. In front of the grocery store is Jesse Hanna and young Tommy Jones jumping with weights and Jake Thornton is

marking the distance. George and Cap Franzen, Dutchy Rettenmeyer and Jim Baker watch the contest.

The picture turns west. Across the street is the Fairbury hall with two store buildings below. It looked just the same as it does now. The first building is occupied by Henry Kingman with his hardware store and the other by Bryant & Elliott's dry goods store. The next store we can see is Pindar Bros. general store; then J. W. Beers' grocery, Si Falkner's harness shop.

Ah, there is a familiar face. It is A. B. Claudon standing in the door of his shop. The same mustache and the same square toed boots. The man with the whiskers standing next door is Tom Scouler, and there is Johnny DeWolf going into his drug store and Noxon Bros. in the same building. Just notice the Main street road, children. It is pure Illinois soil mixed here and there with a few rock. When it rains a half inch it makes about three inches of sloppy mud the entire length of the street. The sidewalks are plank and set upon posts three or four feet above the road. The plank would wear down, leaving the nails and knots sticking up from an inch to two inches to stub your toes upon.

We move to the next block west. There in the window of the corner building is another familiar face. It is Gus Mundt. He doesn't wear a mustache now but his old friends would recognize him. Just starting up the stairway is Smith Olney, with Squire Shepherd just behind. The next place is Frank Franzen's and the next Pete & Louie's. Then there is Joe Rettenmeyer's. The next building is occupied by J. F. Blackburn & Co., the "Co." being John Zimmerman. If you look closely inside you will see a youth with long hair and short pants sweeping out the store. That would be Phil Wade. The picture moves down the line west showing the Odd Fellows' hall, the Masonic hall, Joy's furniture store, Patrick Moran's place, O'Malley Bros. place, Stillwell's shoe store, the T. A. Beach building with Squire Hanna its occupant, the Bartlett, Beach & Dominy Bank, then the post office on the corner with Hiel Ramsey in the front part with a news stand. Oh, yes, D. L. Murdock has his law office in the Beach building.

The picture moves to the next block west. All frame buildings. A. H. Remington's grocery store on the corner, and there in Moin Baily, clerk, and Merritt VanOver, delivery boy. Then comes Miss "Tat" Sackett's millinery store, James Wade's livery stable, A. W. Shreeper's shoe shop, Squire Ross' office, the Central House located about where the Babcock and Keck buildings stand, and farther down on the corner is Earnheart & Baker's implement store.

All are frame buildings in the next block except one, and several vacant lots. The first building is occupied by Tresize, the photographer; one or two vacant buildings; Mrs. Zane's millinery store; Dave Wright's meat shop; Mrs. Decker's millinery store; brick building occupied by Stonehawker & Weaver with a clothing store; then Walton's store on the corner facing west on the square. Across the street south from this is Ben Walton's flour mill. North of Walton's store are two frame buildings, one occupied by Dr. Kimball

with a drug store. On the north side facing the square are a number of imposing two-story brick buildings. The one on the east is O. P. McDowell's hall with Pogue's dry goods store and O. P. McDowell's hardware store occupying the lower floor. The next building is the First National Bank of I. P. McDowell with Taylor & Weaver's loan office upstairs. The next building was occupied by Westervelt & Gravina with grocery store, then H. L. Bruce's furniture store. There is a high board sidewalk going west to another brick block and the west building of this block is occupied by W. H. Taylor's dry goods store.

On the south side of the square is the Arcade Block. On the east corner is Jack Jamison's meat market; the next place is Powley's tin shop; then the building from which the post office has just been moved; the next Katz' clothing store; Joe Yoe's place is the next; Joe Ross' drug store; J. A. Sheaff occupies the next two buildings with his gun shop and marble works; Billy Porter's harness shop and John Mapel is working for him; then comes the office of J. L. Marsh & Son and in the last building on the west is Bowen's grocery store. Hackett's blacksmith shop and McDonald's wagon shop was across the railroad track north of Jamison's market.

At last September 12, 1876, dawns. This is the day of all days in the history of Fairbury, for this is the first day of the first Fairbury Fair. For weeks John Virgin has been hustling to get things in readiness for today. Before the people begin to arrive let us step inside and see what has been done to the bare twenty acres of land.

Oh, my, just look at the buildings! See the floral hall! It is 20×80 feet and there are openings for twenty windows! There is the grandstand. It isn't completed yet but when it is it will be fifty feet long, thirty feet wide and its roof will be thirty feet from the ground. This year we will have to sit in the sun to watch the runners. The race track is all smoothed off and the grass and weeds cut. Look at the nice little trees that Deacon Shepherd has set out. There are two rows of them on the north side of the grounds and row along the track. My, they are nice and even! Just about five feet high and most of them soft maple. Some day they will make a nice shade. Look at the sheds and stalls along the fence for the cattle and horses! And there's a band stand by the side of the amphitheatre. There is a roof to go under when it rains. They just thought of everything. And there is a well west of the floral hall. It has just been dug and has a brand-new pump and boards around it over part of the clay.

We will now go outside and set the camera by the gate and try to get the pictures of as many of the people as we can. It is pretty early in the morning, only 9 o'clock, but here they come. Just look at the string of lumber wagons and spring wagons. Only a few of the town people have carriages. Here come Mr. and Mrs. John Virgin and their daughters.

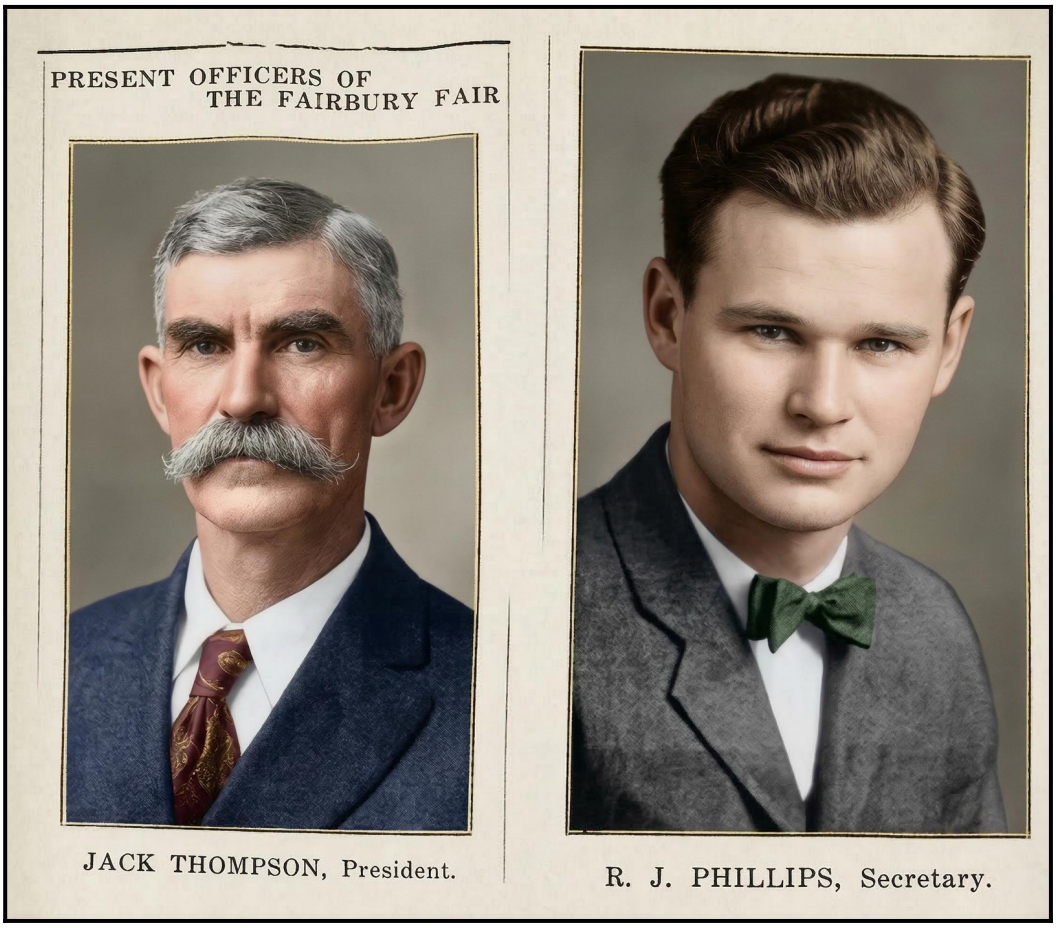
There is John F. Myers, the man who started the fair, and his family. Here come Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Bartlett and family and Mr. Bartlett is going to sell tickets. If there isn't Smith Olney! Doesn't he look natural? He has plenty of business to attend to, for he is secretary. There is John G. Steers and his whole family in a lumber wagon, and there is Dan Potter

and his family in a lumber wagon. Here comes a man on a horse. No, two men on two horses. Well, I declare, the first one is Emory Gregg. Look at the big red sash he is wearing! He is the marshal of the fair.

Doesn't he look fine with his red sash, big black mustache and high boots? Right behind him is his assistant. Well, if it isn't Moin Baily and he is going to announce the prize winners because he has a voice that can be heard out in Potosi Corners. Here are Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Cumpston and family. He has charge of the floral hall. Here come some of the band. There is Alf Powley, Sam Greenebaum, Lafc Kring, Alf Jones, Harry Armstrong, Zack Hanna, Cy Fawkner, John Seeders, Cy Tarlton and Louis Bechthold. Here, walking on the new sidewalk are Mr. and Mrs. Frank Franzen and George and Cassie Myr! Look at the stream of wagons now; they are lined up almost to Main street. There is Bob Elmore and his family from Forrest; Stephen Herr and wife of Chatsworth. There is Henry Skinner and family; there is Owen Finnegan and George Myers and their families. Here is a carriage! It is Mr. and Mrs. L. B. Dominy and family. Look at them coming on the board walk! Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kingman, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Barnhart, Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Murdock, all with their families. There is L. W. Baily, M. H. Baily and his wife, Jesse Baily and Dick Baily. There is W. E. Norman and family. We can't do more than name them as they go by and may miss some of them even then. Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Beach and daughter in a carriage; and here come the doctors, Dr. N. T. P. Robinson and his family, Dr. S. P. Kimball, Dr. McConnell and wife and daughter, Dr. D. Brewer, Dr. Frank Brewer, Dr. J. B. Fulton and family. Just look at the whiskers on the medical fraternity.

And there is Dr. Fraley and wife and son Al. There is A. F. Filley and family. Here comes James McDowell and family with Lee and John Wilf from the farm. There goes William Hackett and family. Here comes John L. Marsh and wife and Lizzie Noise. There is H. L. Marsh and Carrie and John and Miss Knox. That is Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Fulton and son. There comes Wallace Amsbary and wife and all the children. Here is George Scriven and Ed Anable. Well, if there isn't Dave Rogers and Jim Hendricks and Jack Morrison, and who is that with them? Why, that is Dr. Rayburn, the new dentist. Aren't they the dudes of the town? And who is that little game darky with a shoeshining box over his shoulder? Nobody but Dick, that everyone knows. Here come the Kirkwood and Hotchkiss families and James Gibb, who runs the east mine and his family and there are Mr. and Mrs. Tom Scouller and family. Here comes a line of wagons from the country, Mr. and Mrs. William Fugate and family, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh McKee and family, Sam McCord and family, Philip Geomble and family, Adam Kessler and family, Phil Fisher and family, Arlington Foster and family, Jay Morrison and family, Bryan Judd and family, John McGreal and family, T. N. Smith and family, the Gilpin family, the Bradshaws family, William Wagoner and family.

[**Note:** The article continues with another 50 to 100 names of families attending the 1st Fairbury fair.]



The Editor of the Blade also wrote a history story about past Fairbury fairs titled, “Interesting Items Regarding Previous Fairs.”

INTERESTING ITEMS REGARDING PREVIOUS FAIRS

These items were taken from old files of The Blade.

The fair of 1888 showed receipts of $6,006.48. After all bills were paid there was left in the treasury the sum of $1,352.59.

The first fair showed an entry of 370 horses, 105 cattle, 27 sheep, 120 hogs, 118 entries of poultry, 60 entries of implements.

An issue of The Blade telling of the fair of 1877 speaks of a windmill on the grounds, and says “One of Shaw’s Star windmills was put up at a well north of the amphitheatre, from which pipes were laid to a point south of the floral hall, where a neat fountain was erected and jets of water shot several feet into the air, adding much to the already beautiful grounds.”

The amphitheatre at the fair grounds, or rather the first one there, was moved off its foundation by a storm June 25, 1877. One end was shoved off the grounds 16 feet and the other end eight feet. It was during this storm that the Methodist church was wrecked, and much other damage done in Fairbury.

Independent-Blade, August 31, 1878.—A new amphitheatre is built, which in addition to the one previously in use, will seat about 2,000 persons.

Independent-Blade, Sept. 14, 1878.—The phonograph, one of Edison's greatest inventions, was exhibited at the fair grounds by Ed Amable. This wonderful machine talks, plays cornet, sings, laughs and is altogether the wonder of the century. As it cost only 10 cents to hear it, everybody patronized it.

The Blade, Saturday, Sept. 8, 1888.—Wednesday was Democrat day, and Gen. John M. Palmer, Democratic candidate for governor, addressed the people in the afternoon. Thursday was Republican day, and Private Joe Fifer, Republican nominee for governor addressed the largest gathering of people ever assembled in Livingston county.

In speaking of the improvements for the fair starting on September 7, 1891, The Blade says in part: Extensive improvements have been made in the buildings. A new amphitheatre, a new poultry house and several other new buildings have been completed.

In speaking of the fair to be held the following week, The Blade of September 1, 1894, says: There will be plenty of water. The city water system has been extended to the grounds and there will be floods of water if needed.

The Blade, Friday, Sept. 6.—Frank James, of the famous James boys, acted as starter of the races and made a good man for the place. The Kemp Sisters show kept the track hot between the races.

Regarding the free attractions for the fair of September 1–5, 1902, the advertising matter says: "While other fairs are content to have but one special attraction, the Fairbury fair will have two. One is Spencer's great military band, of Peoria, and the other is Rice's Dog and Pony Show."

In speaking of the Thursday crowd of the 1903 fair The Blade says: "Early in the morning crowds commenced to come in buggies and carriages and it was a continual procession until noon. Around the track at the fair grounds the carriages were packed as closely together as possible in double rows, and up town the livery barns were overrun.

The present amphitheatre was built in 1904, and in speaking of it The Blade of September 2, 1904, says in part: "The vast new amphitheatre with a comfortable seating capacity for 3,000 people will be appreciated by everyone. The band stand is directly in the center of this great structure."

The airship made a fine flight Friday afternoon, going up 2,000 feet, and remained up over an hour. It came down in front of the Perlee Produce company on Main street.—The Blade, Friday, Sept. 6, 1907.

The first baby ever born on the Fairbury fair grounds was born on Wednesday evening about 8 o'clock to Mr. and Mrs. Sanders. Mr. Sanders is the head animal trainer with the Big Otto shows. The mother and child are perfectly at home in the big tent at the rear of the big platform and in the same tent are six big leopards.—The Daily Blade, Thursday, September 9, 1909.

In connection with the above the Daily Blade of Friday the 10th says: "The tiny tot ushered into this world at the fair grounds Wednesday night has received her name. The christening occurred at 4 o'clock Thursday afternoon on the fair grounds, just as the baby was twenty hours old. The little mite was taken from the tent, where she was born, and carried to the stand where the baby leopards were on exhibition. Princess Essie Fay, the lady in charge of the performing leopards in the big cage, held the little one in her arms, and just as the sun peeked from behind the clouds, Will J. Braun, who had been selected to christen the baby, stepped forward and in the presence of the surging mob, said: "I christen thee, little one, Essie Fairbury Sanders, and on behalf of the people of our city, I wish you all the success imaginable in your future years'."

The Blade of January 14, 1910, in speaking of the annual meeting held January 12, says in part: "The reports showed that the association cleared last year something over $1,200, $950 of this being spent for a new horticultural hall."

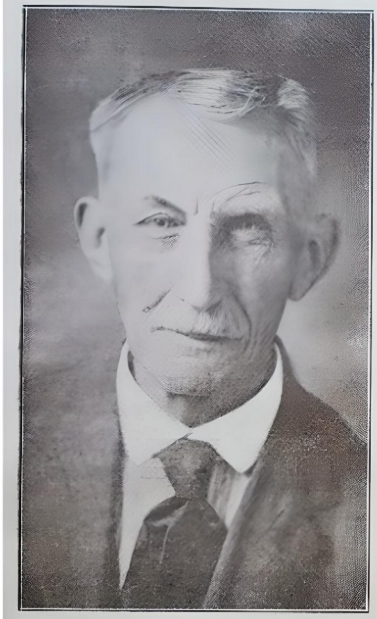
The secretary's report showed that among other things that $5,000 worth of improvements had been made the past year. At this time the matter of erecting a sales barn and stock pavilion on the fair grounds was discussed. It was moved and seconded that the association increase its capital stock to $25,000, and sell additional shares in order to provide funds for this plan. Motion carried.—The Blade, Friday, January 9, 1920.

The Blade ran another human interest story where they found 10 men who had attended every Fairbury held since the inception in 1876.

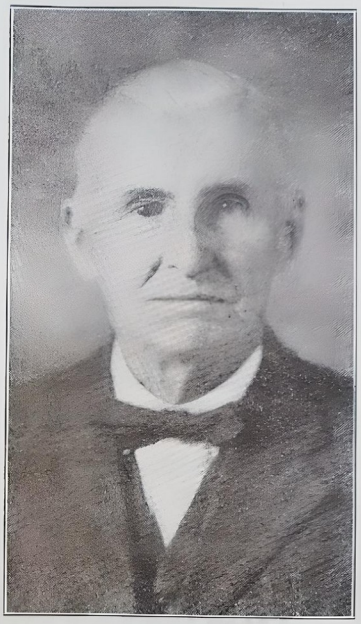
HAVE ATTENDED EVERY FAIR

The pictures of the gentlemen presented herewith, have, with one exception, attended all of the Fairbury fairs since the fair started in 1876. L. S. Carter has attended every fair but one. In addition to having attended every fair, Mr. Mapel was elected president of the organization when the fair was reorganized and saved for several years.

Others who have attended every fair are Casper Franzen, A. G. Phelps, G. Y. McDowell, G. W. Westervelt, and James Langabeer.



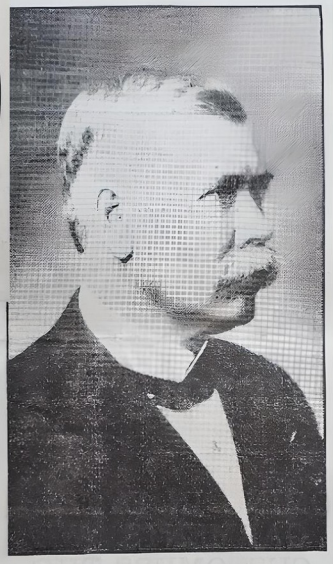
G. H. FRANZEN



L. S. CARTER

W. L. BAILY

J. M. FETZER



NIMROD MAPEL

L. S. Carter wrote an article for the Blade about his memories of attending every Fairbury Fair since it started in 1876.

MR. CARTER SPEAKS OF EARLY FAIRS.

L. S. Carter, who has missed only one fair since the Fairbury fair has started, and who intends to be right there this year, in speaking of the early fairs, says that in those days the wagon was the principal means of transportation. The farmer would come in to the fair in his wagon, with enough boards across the wagon bed to furnish seating room for his family. At the first few fairs there were probably not over a half dozen carriages on the grounds the whole week.

Arriving at the fair the farmer, or other citizen, would purchase a "Family" ticket, and no matter how big the family this ticket was good for all of them all week. The team ticket cost 15 cents, and a grandstand ticket ten cents. A season ticket for a team cost 50 cents.

Mr. Carter, who was then a farmer himself, says the farmers would invariably bring their dinners. They would unhitch the horses, put their feed in the wagon box and tie them to one side of the wagon. While the horses were eating, the family dinner would be spread on the other side of the wagon in the shade. (The trees then were not big enough to furnish shade.)

Mr. Carter states that he well remembers Emory Gregg as marshal of the first Fairbury fair, and that he rode a sorrel horse. Gaudineer took tickets at the east gate and Anthony Bennett performed that duty at the west gate.

Thursday night of the first fair it rained but it did not spoil the fair, the farmers driving their wagons through the mud the next morning to get here.

The principal racing horse in this part of the country at that time was "Charles W," owned by Joseph Moser, of Streator. Starting with the first fair and for two or three years thereafter this horse was entered in the for-for-all trot, and invariably won.

Among the exhibitors at the first fair and for many years thereafter were Younger & Whitmore, of this vicinity, who showed a fine bunch of Devonshire cattle. Dr. Bush, of Sheldon, showed a nice bunch of Shorthorns. The Strawns of Ottawa showed sheep. There was no end of show horses, Mr. Carter stating that at one of the early fairs he saw 28 head of imported stallions in the show ring at one time.

In speaking of the noted men who had addressed Fairbury fair audiences Mr. Carter recalled that Governor Cullom, Republican, was the first noted speaker to appear here. He was here at the fair of 1879. This was at a time following a general business depression, but times were getting better because of the fact that the gold dollar was backing up the greenback. Interest that had been high, was getting back to normal, consequently Gov. Cullom's talk on the subject of drawing in city and county bonds and re-issuing at a lower rate of interest, was very popular.

The next noted speaker to visit the fair was Sam Carry, of Ohio, who spoke in behalf of the Greenback party.

Gen. John M. Palmer, Democratic candidate for governor, spoke on the tariff issue and told his audience to "do away with tariff, have woolen blankets and keep the baby warm."

"Sound Money and Good Citizenship" was the subject of Governor Fifer. He spoke at a time when the gold and silver issue was the one big subject.

United States Senator Dan Voorhees, of Indiana, "the tall sycamore of the Wabash," was another noted speaker of the early fairs, and Mr. Carter says that although a Democrat the senator gave a fine talk on the subject of "Agriculture."

Per the Blade, John Francis Myers was an early settler in Fairbury, but moved to Bloomington and died there. He wrote a poem about the Fairbury Fair titled "A True History – Of the Fairbury Fair, Organized on January 26, 1876. His poem is shown below.

On one September morning,
The weather being clear;
I hied me off to Pontiac
To see their annual fair.
'Twas all of three and twenty miles,
From where I did reside,
Too far to make the daily trip;
I was not satisfied.

I next went to Potosi
To see their one-day show,
Had no accommodations,
Just a picnic, you know.
An idea dawned upon me,
Increasing every day;
To start a fair at Fairbury,
That would the people pay.

To John G. Steers, of Indian Grove,
Quite soon I did propose
A first-class fair at Fairbury,
And what do you suppose
His answer was? "Dear sir," said he,
"I really do expect
If I help you at Fairbury
Potosi will object."

"For I am a director there,
I fear they would me kick,
Only for that I'd help you,
And do it very quick."
I then went to John Virgin,
Solicited his aid;
To organize at Fairbury,
A fair of upper grade.

Said he, "My friend, there's Pontiac
With one each year a fair,
I wish not to antagonize
Nor thwart their prospects there."
Again I saw my friend John Steers,
And said, "Come join me quick;
We'll start a fair at Fairbury,
No matter who may kick.

The kickers will all fall in line,
And will rejoice to see
A first class fair at Fairbury,
And all will happy be.
I very soon got his consent,
We did then advertise
A day to meet in Fairbury,
And there to organize.

It proved to be a grand success,
For all the people round
Quite soon acquiesced in the scheme,
And did its praise resound.
John Virgin soon surrendered
And was with us in the swim,
And gave us much assistance
With characteristic vim.

Committees were appointed
To take each special work,
And each man did his duty,
Not one of them did shirk.
So in the mild September,
A pleasant time to go,
We had all things quite ready
To give a splendid show.

We had a grand attendance,
With stock of every line;
Such fairs are always pleasing,

For it was superfine.
It still retains its prestige,
Well known all o'er of late,
And none of equal magnitude
Surpass it in the state.

These honorable gentlemen
Who helped to make it go,
Were the first set of officers
To run that splendid show.
John Virgin was the president,
And John G. Steers the vice,
Smith Olney was secretary,
Bartlett treasurer without price.

The following were directors,
On success they were bent,
Their time and services were free,
They did not charge a cent.
D. L. Murdock and Bob Elmore,
Henry Kingman, all good men;
Ben Cumpston and Ed Norman,
J. F. Myers, who wields this pen.

George Myers, Jacob Bailey,
Henry Skinner, Stephen Herr,
John Earnheart, Danny Potter,
Owen Finnegan were there.
And there was Joseph Phillips,
With good stock, upon my word,
And also William Younger
Who showed his Devon herd.

And also D. R. Potter,
With fine stock right on hand;
And Uncle Benny Cumpston,
They prizes oft did land;
And my friend Ed Mahoney,
And Percy James in line,
With Mr. Merrill also,
Their stock was always fine.

And Thomas Ramsey showed some stock
Of extra size and grand;
Virgin's imported drafters
Sometimes did prizes land.
And many more exhibits
Of transient men were there,
Ladies' exhibits added much
To make the Fairbury fair.

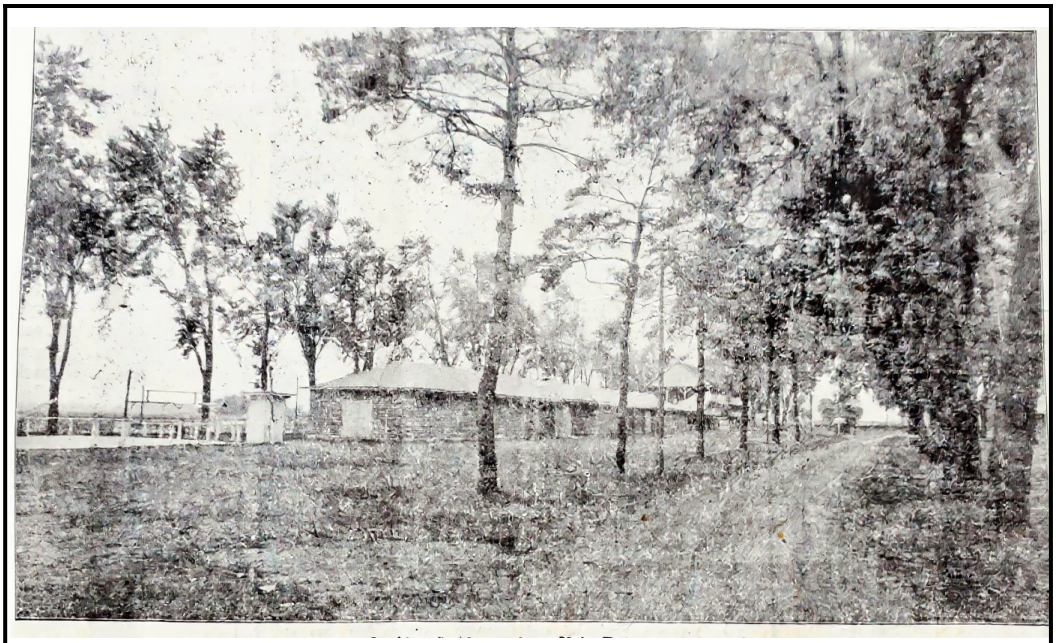
But Walton Brothers showed the best
Variety all around—
Hardware, machinery, carriages,
Their dry goods made a fancy show,
No better could be found;
They were of every line,
They pleased the people, don't you know,
They were superbly fine.

And other early officers,
T. Beach and Rufus Straight,
John Zimmerman and H. L. Bruce,
With Dominy, were great.
And many other gentlemen
Gave us much timely aid,
Were always ready to assist,
After the plans were laid.

Now Livingston may well be proud
Of her great Fairbury fair;
For many, many do enjoy
A lovely visit there.
The profits educational
Received while at the fair,
Will far exceed the time and cash
You spend while you are there.

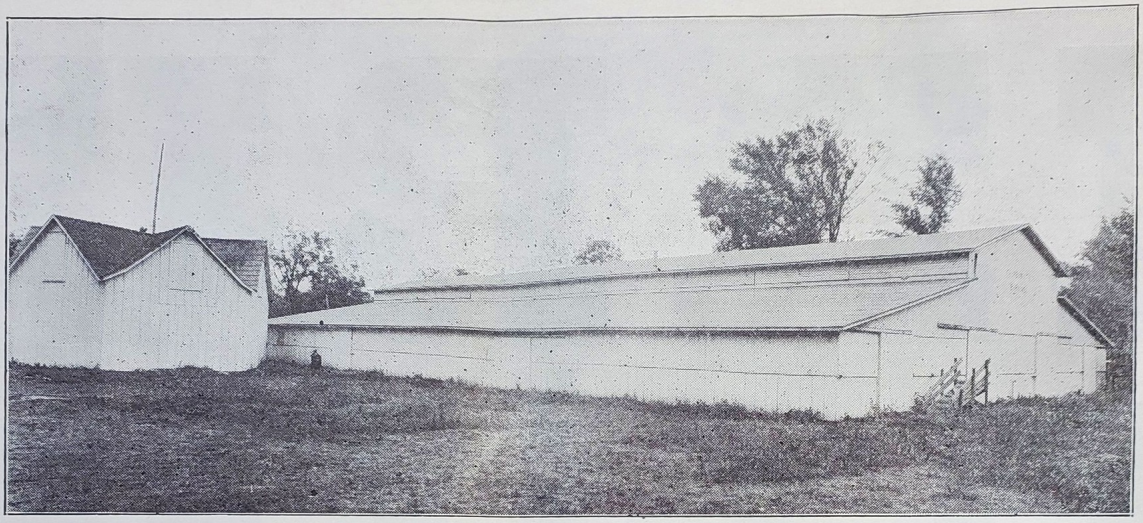
Let everyone appreciate
The efforts made to boom
A first-class fair at Fairbury,
And keep her on the boom;
Then when we all pass over there,
To that bright land of rest,
Posterity will boom her on,
And keep her still the best.

The 1925 Blade published many photos of the fairgrounds and they are shown below. Some of these 101 year old photos are faded in the old Blade newspapers, but they are the only photos known to exist today.



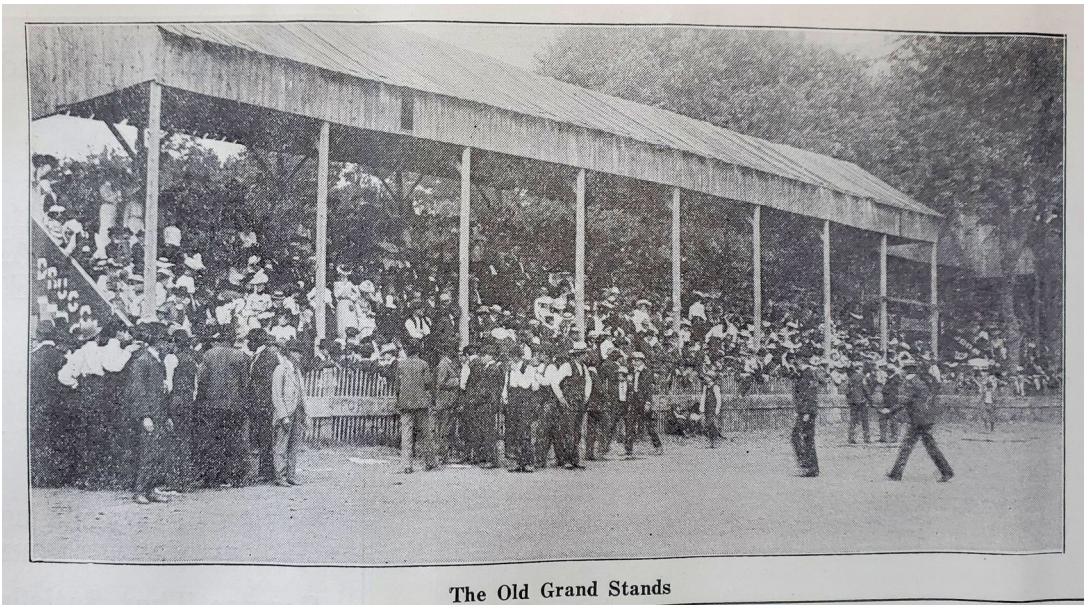
Looking southwest from main entrance.

Software was used to digitally enhance the very faded photo of the main entrance in the 1925 Blade. The sign on the west building says "Free Tourists Park."



The Present Modern Hog House and Sales Barn, With Poultry House to the Left. (Photo by Fultz)

When Milady's Skirt Swept the Fair Grounds Clean.



The Old Grand Stands

Rare photo of the grandstands that existed before the grandstand was rebuilt in 1903.

Our Present Grand Stands (Photo by Fultz)

Grandstands as they existed in 1925.

CHAPTER 8

1926 to 1929

1926

This fair was held on September 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. It included both horse and auto racing. There was lots of dancing including three different orchestras.

All outdoor events like the Fairbury fair are at the mercy of the elements. Mother Nature basically canceled all events on Wednesday due to heavy rains. The Fairbury fair was able to conduct normal activities the other days of the event.

1927

This fair was held on September 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The main ad in the Blade for this Fairbury fair is shown below.

FAIRBURY FAIR
September 5-6-7-8-9-10 Day and Night
September 5-6-7-8-9-10 Day and Night
Illinois Biggest and Best County Fair
ALWAYS LABOR DAY WEEK
LABOR DAY SPECIALS
Horseshoe Tourney
Two $500 Stake Races
Six-furlong Running Race
Society Horse Show featuring $1,000 Special Five Gaited Class
Five High Class Free Acts
L. J. HETH SHOWS on the Midway
8 Rides 12 Shows
Saturday
September 10
LIVINGSTON County Derby
Five Running Races
SOCIETY HORSE SHOW
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday Nights on the best illuminated track in the state.
Better Babies Conference
A Complete Livestock and Agriculture Exhibit
SOCIETY HORSE SHOW
The second annual Society Horse Show with its many beautiful and well trained horses will again be the big feature of our night entertainment.
DERBY DAY
The first annual Derby Day will be the final day's program with five big running races.
IT'S A BIGGER AND BETTER FAIR

This was the first fair to conduct a "Society Horse Show." A "society horse show" at the Fairbury Fair in 1927 would have been an evening program of light horse classes designed as

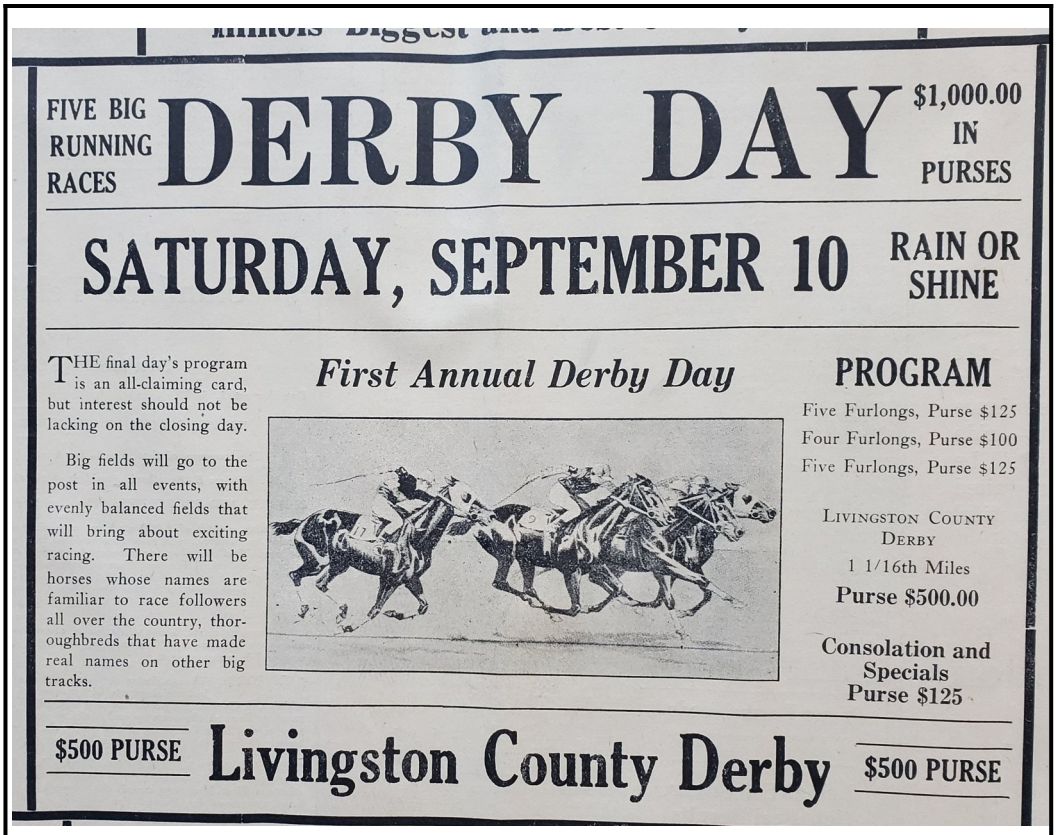
much for spectacle as for competition. It showcased well-bred saddle and driving horses—often owned or shown by prominent local families—presented in fine harness and elegant riding attire under the lights of the grandstand.

Classes likely emphasized style, manners, and appearance rather than pure speed, with parades and special classes for gaited horses, ladies' mounts, and matched teams. For fairgoers, it was billed as a high-class feature of the night entertainment, contrasting with the daytime farm and workhorse events and reinforcing the fair's image as both an agricultural exposition and a social occasion.

These Society Horse Shows were popular and repeated at several later Fairbury fairs.

Another new event at this fair was the Better Babies conference as described in the Blade.

> **Babies Occupy Prominent Place at the Fair.**
>
> The Better Babies conference was one of the really big features of the fair. Due to the energy of the community nurse, Miss Ruth M. Newton, and her assistant, Miss Lucile Griggs, an unusually large number of parents were interested in bringing their babies in for examination.
>
> Mrs. St. Clair Drake, of Chicago, who checked up on the scores made by eighty babies that alternately cooed angelically or vociferously voiced their displeasure with some act of the examining physicians, said they had found a well balanced group of children, neither extremely high nor very low scores. Mrs. Drake was assisted by Dr. Oscar Chase, lecturer at Rush Medical; Dr. Fortner, of the ear and eye infirmary, Chicago, and Miss Augusta Button, psychologist at the Juvenile Research Institute. Dr. Drake assisted Mrs. Drake, Tuesday.
>
> Little three and a half year old Virginia Munz, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Munz, Jr., was cited by the judges as an almost perfect child, but fell short in that she was a trifle overweight and her chest measurement slightly over the correct figure.
>
> Winners in this department were: 6 months, under 12—1st, Rosemary, daughter of Howard Davis, Odell; 2nd, Mildred Elizabeth, daughter of Fred Flessner, Piper City; Evelyn, daughter of Clarence E. Pearson, of Chatsworth, tied for first. Boys—Kenneth Ray, son of W. R. Winter, Chenoa, 1st; Jonathan J., son of Walter Hetherington, Fairbury, 2nd.



FIVE BIG RUNNING RACES

DERBY DAY

$1,000.00 IN PURSES

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

RAIN OR SHINE

THE final day's program is an all-claiming card, but interest should not be lacking on the closing day.

Big fields will go to the post in all events, with evenly balanced fields that will bring about exciting racing. There will be horses whose names are familiar to race followers all over the country, thoroughbreds that have made real names on other big tracks.

First Annual Derby Day

PROGRAM

Five Furlongs, Purse $125
Four Furlongs, Purse $100
Five Furlongs, Purse $125

LIVINGSTON COUNTY DERBY
1 1/16th Miles
Purse $500.00

Consolation and Specials Purse $125

$500 PURSE **Livingston County Derby** $500 PURSE

Horse racing continued to be a popular event at the 1927 Fairbury fair.

Special Feature for the Fairbury Fair—Chenoa High School Day.

By special arrangement the Chenoa High School Band of 22 pieces including drum major and director, will give two concerts on Tuesday (Children's Day), one in the afternoon on the track in front of the grandstand and another on the free act platform at 7 o'clock in the evening preceding the night show.

This band is under the direction of Earl Meeker of Pontiac and is the pride of Chenoa and vicinity. Come out, all you high school students and greet this high school band in full uniform of crimson and gray, their high school colors, marching down the track with colors flying.

Today, we still struggle getting cooperation with the State of Illinois, particularly with respect to U.S. Route 24 that goes through the center of Fairbury. The 1927 Fairbury boosters experienced problems with the state of Illinois as the Blade reported below.

Fair Signs Are Ordered Removed

Previous to doing any advertising the Fairbury fair officials got permission to tack signs advertising the fair on the various state route sign posts along the hard roads in this section of the state. This was done, those doing the advertising traveling hundreds of miles and the fair association spending many dollars in putting up these signs. Yesterday morning word was received from the state road department ordering that the work of taking the fair signs down be started at once, which was done.

While the fair no doubt derived some benefit from the signs in the time they were up, right now is when that advertising is needed.

The Fairbury Echoes Museum has a photo dated 1927 of a horse that won a race at the 1927 Fairbury fair.

MISS CLEORA MILLER
CROWNS "WAPITI" WINNER OF THE FIRST
LIVINGSTON CO. DERBY AT FAIRBURY FAIR
SEPT. 10-'27. TIME 1:52. BUTLER UP.
OWNED BY ED PATTON, FAIRBURY, ILL. PHOTO BY FULTZ

Photo from 1927 Fairbury fair.

1928

This fair was held on September 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The Blade developed a neat illustration for this fair and published it on the first page of the newspaper.

The Fairbury Blade
Largest Circulation of Any Weekly Newspaper in Livingston County. The Blade Reaches 11,000 Readers Every Week.
PRICE $2.00 PER YEAR.
FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 1928
SIXTY-FIRST YEAR—4
WELCOME!
FAIRBURY FAIR, SEPT. 3-8

1928 Fairbury fair.

1929

This fair was held on September 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Below is part of the Blade advertisement for this fair.

The Fairbury Blade
Largest Circulation of Any Weekly Newspaper in Livingston County. The Blade Reaches 11,000 Readers
FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 30, 1929
FAIR WEEK

The decade of the 1920s was remembered as one of the most prosperous eras Fairbury had seen, and many local farm families finally had enough cash to enjoy extras like a vacation week at the Fairbury Fair. While farmers nationally struggled with falling prices after World War I, the broader prosperity of the "Roaring Twenties" meant better markets for livestock and grain at times, rising land values in central Illinois, and more automobiles on rural roads, all of which helped boost fair attendance and concession business.

Fairbury residents in 1929 had little idea how quickly those good times would unravel. The long bull market on Wall Street collapsed in a series of dramatic sell-offs in late October 1929, culminating in "Black Tuesday," October 29, when stock prices plunged and billions of dollars in paper value disappeared almost overnight. Historians often treat this crash as the symbolic beginning of the Great Depression, a deep and prolonged economic downturn that in the United States ran roughly from 1929 until the country's wartime mobilization in the early 1940s.

As the Depression tightened its grip, farm prices fell further, credit dried up, and many central Illinois families had to cut back sharply on travel and entertainment. County and local fairs across the Midwest saw shrinking gate receipts, and some—like the Fairbury Fair—were forced to suspend operations for several seasons when operating losses became unsustainable. Even when the grounds were quiet, though, memories of the big 1920s crowds and the hope of better days ahead helped keep the idea of the Fairbury Fair alive until conditions finally improved.

The Fairbury Fair of 1929 was a great success and the Blade reported the following on that fair.

> The free acts this year as usual are of a high class, with the Cotton Pickers drawing the most applause. Nevertheless the other acts come in for their share of handclapping and appreciation. The local high school band, together with other bands entered in the high school band contest, furnished the music during the first three days with the Forrest band playing the last three days. Both the quality and the quantity of the music furnished is highly appreciated.
>
> The rides, shows and other concessions of the Strayer Amusement company fill the midway, making it a lively place, especially at night. Their shows are clean, a fact the people appreciate. While this amusement company takes up much of the

space, there is a strip of ground along the north edge of the grounds that is occupied by displays of automobiles and various kinds of farming implements. The Claudon Motor Mart is showing the various makes of Fords; Walton Bros. company are showing a most interesting display of farming machinery, some of which is in motion; R. V. Bradley, of Pontiac, is showing a line of washing machines; the Huber Motor company has the various models of the Buick on display; the C. I. P. S. company is showing a line of washing machines, ice-less refrigerators and electric stoves. Various kinds of hog houses and other equipment used on the farm are to be found here.

Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

Mildred Skrobonak
Long-Time Fairbury Fair Worker
1921-2008

Photographs from the 1990s

CHAPTER 9

1930 to 1940

1930

This fair was held on September 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. One of the ads for this fair in the Blade is shown below.

The Fairbury Blade

Largest Circulation of Any Weekly Newspaper in Livingston County. Member Illinois Select Weeklies Group

FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 1930

FAIR

September 1-6 - WEEK - September 1-6

FOR downright thrills and fun, coupled with real education, no attraction can compete with the Fair. Spend a morning visiting the exhibits there and in the stores, attend to any business you may have, then in the afternoon and evening enjoy the endless carnival of sports and entertainment that has been arranged for you.

WELCOME TO THE FAIR

1930 Fairbury fair.

The Fairbury Township Band was one of the featured events at the 1930 Fairbury fair.

THE FAIRBURY TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL BAND

To encourage progress in organizing and maintaining High School Bands, the Fairbury Fair offers opportunity and prizes for contests during the 1930 Fair. There are six Bands entered in this contest: Gilman High School Band with 45 pieces, Gibson City High School Band with 35 pieces, Saunemin High School Band with 35 pieces, Chenoa High School Band with 28 pieces, Odell High School Band with 25 pieces, and the Fairbury Township High School Band with 74 pieces. The contest will take place in the bandstand in front of the grandstand.

On Monday, September 1 (Labor Day) the Gilman, Chenoa and Odell bands will play in contest and on Tuesday, September 2, (Children's Day) the Gibson City, Saunemin and Fairbury bands will play in contest. Monday and Tuesday evenings the bands appearing on those days will compete in a drill and marching contest on the race track in front of grandstand. This is the second annual band contest for high school bands in connection with the Fair. Last year's contest with its three bands proved one of the features of the Fair. This year with six bands which are larger and farther advanced in music will give the patrons and lovers of band music two afternoons and evenings of high class entertainment. Plan now to get out and boost for this High School project and your band.

The Society Horse Show and all free attractions will be offered for your approval on these two days.

The Blade reported on the free acts that were at the 1930 Fairbury fair.

> The fifty-fifth annual Fairbury fair will get under way on next Monday morning and for six days and nights will furnish a program of education, entertainment and amusement. The Fairbury fair has for years been one of the outstanding events of this section of Illinois and this year will be no exception.
>
> The opening day falls on Labor day and the race program for the afternoon is composed of all running events, the chief among the six races being the Livingston County Derby of 1 1/16 miles. The last day of the fair will also be given over to running races. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the racing program will consist of harness events. Supt. of Speed J. C. Hagen says the prospects are bright for the largest number of runners and harness horses which have been here in years.
>
> The attractions which will entertain the people on the big platform are of the best and consist of the Six Tip Tops, the Three Jesters, Two Broken Toys and others. The high school band contest starts on Monday and continues for three days. The remainder of the week the Forrest-Fairbury band will furnish the music. Another musical organization which will entertain the people throughout the week is Grace Lynn and her Gang, one of the free attractions.
>
> One of the principal attractions is the society horse show, which occurs each evening. This show ranks with the best of its kind held anywhere, and brings together the best horse flesh to be found in the whole country. The free acts will also be given each evening and there will be a band present to furnish a musical program.

1931, 1932, and 1933 Fairbury Fairs

In 1931, the organizers of the fair reviewed the expenses of past fairs. They decided they needed to raise $2,500 before they conducted the fair. Mr. J. P. Cook was put in charge of the citizen's committee to raise the $2,500. When only $925 could be raised, J. P. Cook announced that the decision had been made not to have a 1931 Fairbury Fair because of general financial and business conditions.

As economic conditions further deteriorated during the Great Depression, officials decided there would be no Fairbury Fair in 1932 and 1933. The Fairbury Fair finally resumed in 1934.

1934

The Blade published an article announcing the Fairbury Fair would resume in 1934.

> **EIGHTY-FOUR SIGNATURES ON FAIR GUARANTY LIST**
>
> September 18-19-20 Are the Dates Set for the Fairbury Fair This Year — People Ripe For It.
>
> Preliminary plans and preparations for the coming Fairbury Fair to be held September 18, 19, 20, have been going forward during the past week. Secretary G. H. Decker and other Fair officers, with the assistance of many of the members of John Joda post, American Legion, have been speeding the preliminary work and a considerable amount of publicity matter has already been posted. Superintendents of the various departments are laying their plans, and a most successful and entertaining Fair is assured.
>
> We publish herewith the names of the business firms and individuals who have contributed to the fund which was necessary to make the Fair possible this year. If the committee has overlooked you, and you desire to help guarantee this most worthy enterprise, call on W. C. Schmidt at the Walton Department Store, or any other member of the committee or Fair officers. To make sure that everyone understands the plan we will repeat that all contributions to the guaranty fund will be returned in full to the contributors if the weather is favorable during the fair and the event is successful from a financial standpoint.
>
> Following are the contributors to the fund.

Van's Service Station.
Steidinger Service.
Fairbury Auto Co.
American Legion.
Fairbury State Bank.
Walton Dept. Store.
Milo Betz.
The Blade.
Illinois Hotel.
Ford Garage.
J. P. Cook Estate.
Herbert Hurt.
Herzog Produce Co.
Keck's Agency.
Ralston's 5 & 10c.
J. W. Nosek.
H. H. Phelps.
Van Horne Grain Co.
J. C. Hagen.
Geo. Armbruster.
Eli Moser.
R. B. Grover.
Home Cafe.
Weber Meat Market.
Bert Monroe.
Sam F. Haab.
Joe Carrithers.
Larkin Store.
Franger Motor Co.
Co-operative Coal Co.
Harold Ringler.
Standard Oil Co.
Texaco Oil Co.
Claudon Motor Mart.
Local Record.
C. B. Day.
Carl Metz.
Nussbaum Bros.
Kring Bros.
David Beckley.
J. H. Langstaff.
A. G. Milne & Sons.
Farmers Grain Co.
Conrad Munz.
J. E. Sargeant.

Nussbaum Bros.
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J. H. Langstaff.
A. G. Milne & Sons.
Farmers Grain Co.
Conrad Munz.
J. E. Sargeant.
F. A. Werling.
Mowry Funeral Home.
Mowry Agency.
Dr. F. H. Miller.
Wade's Drug Store.
T. J. Lyons.
Levi Troehler.
Dailey Lumber Co.
James Meat Market.
Kurth Bakery.
Shell Oil Co.
Bach Lumber Co.
B-M Store.
J. E. Thomas.
Wiedman Store.
Bell Grocery.
Dr. Pendergast.
P. C. James, Jr.
Sweney Oil Co.
Farmers State Bank.
A. & P. Store.
C. M. Harper.
Kroger Grocery.
Dick Shilts.
Dr. Thatcher.
H. E. Troehler.
Model Grocery.
P. M. Hotaling.
H. A. Kilgus.
H. E. Carter.
D. D. Fultz.
The Bon Ton.
Dr. Marshall.
E. A. Agard.
Frank Joda.
Dr. E. F. Law.
Hibsch Bros.
Harley Bedell.
Alexander Lbr. Co.

The Blade published another article about the 1934 Fairbury fair planned activities.

FINE PROGRAM ARRANGED
FOR THE FAIRBURY FAIR

Balloon Ascensions, Races, Free Acts, Ball Games, Carnival and Many Other Features Are Listed.

It has been many years since a balloon ascension was one of the attractions at the Fairbury fair, but they used to have them here and the Fairbury fair of 1934 is going to have them again—and they will be thrillers. The balloon ascension is mentioned as just one of the many attractions, for there will be horse racing, free acts, ball games and many other forms of entertainment.

Prof. Skiver, of Indianapolis, Ind., has been engaged to give the balloon ascension. On Tuesday and Wednesday, September 18 and 19, Prof. Skiver will make a double parachute drop, and on the third day he will make a triple parachute descent.

Another thrilling act each afternoon and evening is a 90-foot dive into a net by Daredevil Harry. Another feature afternoon and night will be Dorothy Nugent and Imogent McKown, of Clinton, final winners in the McCollum theatres "Search for Talent" contest. Other daily and evening features will be Clif and Dot, in two fast acrobatic and comedy acts. The Tilley Amusement company with five rides and eight shows will occupy the midway.

The Russian orchestra, a feature musical act over station WMBD, Peoria, will be heard each afternoon and evening at the fair.

Tuesday night Prof. Haskell with his Pontiac township high school circus, will be here. There are 35 tumblers in this group and they give a fine performance. Wednesday night as an added attraction the barn dance crew from station WMBD, 21 in number, will be present. Thursday night Jane Eckhart will give a dance and song specialty act. Irene Kircher, the blues singer of radio and stage fame, and Ned, Bud and Jerry, singers, and all artists from the Peoria radio station, will entertain.

The bands secured for the three days and nights are: Tuesday, Wesleyan University band; Wednesday, the State Normal University band, and Thursday the Sailors and Soldiers School band.

In addition to the above entertainment there will be two harness races of three heats each, and a mule race. Two big political days are scheduled and prominent speakers will discuss the issues of the day. Tuesday is Republican day, and Wednesday is Democratic day while the third day is reserved for the Legion. On the political days the various candidates are scheduled to drive the mules and on Legion day the Legion boys will guide the jassacks around the track, if such a thing can be done.

Those who get enjoyment from viewing the livestock or looking over the flowers, quilts, rugs or needlework or perhaps gaze with longing eyes at the pies, cakes, jellies, jams, etc., all of that will be theirs.

One of the outstanding features of the fair this year is the American Legion boxing show to be staged in a big tent each night of the fair. There will be five bouts of five rounds each. The boxing card on the first and opening night promises to be a fast one, the following boys being matched.

118-pound class—Jimmie Haley vs. Mark Lewis; Joe Medara, of Springfield, vs. Billy Pryor, of Peoria; Armand Sicillia, of Peoria, (national amateur champion) vs. Henry Huerta, of Chillicothe.

130-pound class—Tremont Rodine, of Chillicothe, vs. Peewee Woods, of Peoria; Ben Bullock, of Peoria, vs. Red Davis, of Springfield.

The Legion is asking that you help promote one of the best boxing shows ever attempted outside of the larger cities.

Jassacks

In that 1934 sentence, “jassacks” is almost certainly a playful or dialect spelling of “jackass,” meaning donkeys or mules.

Writers often used humorous or euphemistic spellings like this in local newspapers and carnival or fair advertising to sound folksy and avoid printing a word some readers might consider coarse. In the article above, “guide the jassacks around the track” just means the Legion men would be driving or leading the mules/donkeys in a lighthearted event.

The Blade announced that the 1934 Fairbury fair was a great success.

THE 1934 FAIR A SUCCESS FROM EVERY STANDPOINT

All Guarantee Money Has Been Refunded to Guarantors—Premiums and Bills All Paid.

The 1934 Fairbury fair, which was held here last week, was a success from every standpoint. Most important of all, it was a financial success. We are not prepared to say at this time just how successful financially the fair was, as there has, as yet, been no official statement from the officers of the Fair association, but we do know that every premium was paid to the premium winners on the ground; that every item of expense has been paid; and that every Fairbury business man who contributed a sum, either large or small, to the guaranty fund, has received his money back in full from the Fair association, and we have reason to believe that there is still a nest egg left. And wouldn't it be fine if this sum could be tucked away and reserved as a guaranty fund for next year's fair?

The three-day Fairbury fair closed on last Thursday night with a large crowd present to bid adieu to the successful comeback of this old institution. The weather remained in a fine fair week mood for the last day, and the large crowd started to come early.

The program throughout the day and evening was one that John Joda post and the officers of the fair might well be proud of.

1935

Automobile racing and a wedding were the main attractions of this Fair per the Blade.

Auto Races and Wedding, Closing Events of Fair

Auto Racers Give Spectators Thrills in Fast Races—Local Justice Performs Marriage Ceremony.

Thrilling automobile races were the last events on the 1935 Fairbury fair racing card, while a public wedding concluded the evening program. A local justice of the peace, Harley B. Bedell, performed the marriage ceremony.

The wedding took place before an audience of around 1,800 people on the platform in front of the amphitheatre where the musical revue was staged. The contracting parties were Miss Adeline Gibbs, of Hillsborough, Fla., and John D. Coleman, of Harrisburg. Members of the cast of the revue acted as bridesmaids, best man and ring-bearer, while the revue orchestra played the wedding march. The tenor singer of the company sang one number preceding the ceremony.

The automobile races were attended by a couple of mishaps, but fortunately neither one was serious. In the second preliminary Driver Joseph Gerth lost control of his car

momentarily and jumped the track but straightened it out without injury to the car or himself. In the third preliminary race Driver H. Cox, of Dallas, Tex., crashed the inside fence and piled up on five parked cars belonging to spectators. All five were damaged slightly but Cox pulled his car out of the tangle and drove it to the pit under its own power.

Bill Morris, of Dallas, Texas, won the purse of $400 in the final race of the day, billed as the W. R. Hayes sweepstakes. He drove the 10 miles in 10:15¾. John Tressenor, of Chicago, finished second and Morris Music, of Dallas, Tex., third. There were nine entrants but only five finished.

Summaries of the preliminaries:
First race—Bill Morris, Dallas, Texas, won; second, John Tressenor, Chicago; third, Vern Franke, West Frankfort. Distance 5 miles. Time 5:15 1-5.

Second race—Red Campbell, of Indianapolis, won; second, Morris Music, of Dallas, Texas; third, Oscar Coleman, Dallas, Texas. Distance, 5 miles. Time 5:11.

Third race—Louis Brown, of Champaign, won; second, Peter De Siest, of Decatur; third, Frank Peter, of Decatur. Distance 5 miles. Time 5:14 3-5.

The D. D. Murphy Shows, which occupied the Midway here, went to Peoria, where they are this week at the Peoria Race Meet and Society Horse Show at the Peoria fair grounds. The members of the night show, the Follies of 1935, went to Salem, where they are the principal attraction at the Old Salem picnic and reunion.

H. E. Strong, who was manager of the local fair, is in charge of the Peoria fair.

1936

The Blade announced the 1936 Fairbury Fair was ready to go.

All Is Now Ready for Fairbury Fair September 1-2-3-4

Four Days and Four Nights of High Class Entertainment — Many Premiums Listed.

With a few minor exceptions the plans for the 1936 Fairbury fair are all complete and it promises to be an outstanding event in this locality for the fall season. It will be held day and night, September 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The fair catalogs have just been printed by The Blade and are now being sent out to those who want them.

The following information contained on the first couple of pages of the catalog will be of general interest:

Officers.

President ..... P. J. Keck
Vice President ..... Edward Yeagle
Treasurer ..... K. V. Keck
Secretary ..... George H. Decker
Assistant Secretary ..... H. W. Meisenhelder
Directors—H. W. Meisenhelder, John W. Wessels, Edward A. Yeagle, Edward L. Lange, P. J. Keck, Harry Klopfenstein, Matt Lewis, L. S. Henderson, H. J. Downs, Glenn Martin, C. E. Wink, W. D. Henning.

Admissions.

Season ticket, adult $1.00
Season ticket, children over 10, under 15 75c

A new performance at the 1936 Fairbury fair was a "Delayed Parachute Jumper."

Delayed Parachute Jumper Signed.

One of the latest free attractions signed up for the Fairbury fair is a delayed parachute jumper. Yesterday a contract was signed with Art Carnahan, of Bloomington, to furnish this unusual event for each day of the fair.

The delayed parachute jumper kicks off from an airplane and drops a distance of around eight thousand feet before opening up his parachute. A sack of flour which he carries with him and which he opens up as he leaves the plane shows the spectators his downward plunge.

Friday Homecoming Day.

Friday is homecoming day at the fair this year and many former residents are expected back to greet old acquaintances.

The Blade also published an article about the planned free attractions at the 1936 Fairbury fair.

Free Attractions to be a Feature of the Fairbury Fair

To Furnish Clean Entertainment Both Afternoon and Evening During the Four Days.

One of the outstanding features of the Fairbury fair will be the many free acts that will be shown on the large platform, both afternoon and night during the four days of the fair. In addition to the platform free acts there will also be several other acts that are of a high class. The outstanding one of these latter acts was mentioned in The Blade of last week—the delayed parachute drop from a distance of some ten thousand feet.

Included in the acts to be shown on the platform are Cramor & Zorsky in three sensational acts. Zorsky in his original high pedestal act, performs the most daring and miraculous balancing feats in midair. This is the only act of its kind in the world, being performed without the aid of a net or any safety device.

Included in the comedy acts are Freckles and Buddy, Buddy being a most intelligent and well trained dog that with the assistance of his master does some very difficult tricks.

On Wednesday night will be presented the Senitoni Follies, an all-colored cast of sixty people, with special scenery, beautiful wardrobe and special lighting effects. They present one of the fastest stepping lines of chorus girls ever assembled for a colored musical show.

A musical comedy that appears on Thursday night is “Along Melody Lane.” This musical comedy show carries a cast of 65 people and a concert orchestra of 15 musicians. Their program consists of songs, dances and comedy, which together with their beautiful costumes will make an entertaining and pleasing program.

The “Imperial Four” adagio team from Pontiac, which is one of the feature attractions at the state fair at Springfield, will be one of the attractions at the Fairbury fair. This adagio quartet is in charge of Jack Haskin, director of physical education at Pontiac, and the fact that they have been selected to appear for a whole week at the state fair speaks volumes for their ability as entertainers.

The one feature in which Fairbury people will be especially interested is the “Fearless Tommy” act. Fearless Tommy is Tommy Hornsby, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hornsby, of this city. Fearless Tommy does a death-defying act from a swinging trapeze 50 feet from the ground and does it without a net to protect him. For several years past he has been giving this act in many of the larger cities of the country and it has been received with acclaim wherever he goes.

The above are only a few of the many free acts visitors to the Fairbury fair will witness, and they are all in addition to the many other features provided for your entertainment.

Friday Night Is Amateur Night.

Friday night, the last night of the fair, is going to be amateur night. That those in charge of the fair intend to make it a big night is vouched for by the fact that prizes of $50, $25 and $10 will be given for first, second and third prize respectively. No doubt the best amateur talent in this and other sections of the state will be here to try for the generous prizes.

Fairbury American Legion Post 54 Takes over Fairbury Fair in 1936

Although the Fairbury fair was started back up in 1934 after three years of no fair, Fairbury was still in the depths of the Great Depression. The Fair Association was broke and owed money to several creditors in 1936.

The March 20, 1936, issue of the Blade reported a reorganization of the Fairbury fair was being considered.

SEEKING TO REORGANIZE
FAIRBURY FAIR ASSOCIATION

A number of people of this city and vicinity are going into the matter of reorganizing the Fairbury Fair association and have held several meetings to talk over the proposition. L. S. Henderson and Harry Klopfenstein have during the past week called on a number of our citizens to get their attitude regarding the suggestion.

It is a question that our citizens should give serious and open minded consideration. The Fairbury fair for some fifty five years has been an important part of this community and should be retained.

The May 1, 1936, issue of the Blade reported the American Legion would be taking over the Fairbury fair.

FAIR MEETING TO BE HELD
NEXT MONDAY EVENING

A meeting to go forward with plans for the carrying on of the Fairbury fair is to be held at the American Legion rooms next Monday evening. A letter was sent out this week calling attention to the meeting. The letter, which speaks for itself, is as follows:

Dear Friend:

A joint committee of the local Legion Post and Citizens of our community has formulated a plan for the revival and carrying on of the Fairbury Fair, which is of vital interest to the people of this community.

The Fair Grounds will be purchased; and an association properly organized to maintain and perpetuate this worthy project.

The plan will give security to subscribers; and your co-operation will assist in presenting it to the people of the community.

If you are willing to help, kindly meet with us at the Legion rooms on Monday, May 4th, at 7:30 p. m.

You are urged to come and bring any friends who are interested.

Sincerely yours,
THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

On May 8, 1936, the Blade reported the details of the American Legion taking over the Fairbury fair.

Citizens in Meeting to Discuss Sale of Fairbury Fair Stock

Stockholders To Have Mortgage On Grounds – Legion To Purchase Large Share of Stock.

An interested group of Fairbury citizens and several from surrounding towns met at the American Legion rooms Monday evening to talk over matters pertaining to the reviving of the Fairbury fair and the sale of stock. Included in the 62 present were a goodly number of Legion members.

P. J. Keck was chairman of the meeting and went into detail regarding the plans formulated by a joint committee composed of Legion members and citizens not identified with the Legion.

These plans are in substance as follows: Eight thousand dollars worth of stock will be sold, the money to be used in giving the Legion a working capital of $1,650 with which to operate the 1936 fair and to pay off the notes that are now held by the Fairbury State bank and the George Olm estate trustee. These latter two sums are $2,350 and $4,000 respectively. The local Legion post will purchase new stock to the amount of $1,000.

With each share of stock sold there will not only be issued to the purchaser a share of stock, but also a note which will be held by the purchaser as a lien against the fair grounds till it is paid. It is the plan of the Legion to take these notes up as fast as possible, the same to be paid for by proceeds from the fair and other entertainments to be held on the grounds. The only qualification that the Legion asks is that these notes do not draw interest for the first two years.

It is the plan of the local Legion post to have control of the fair. This will be accomplished by the purchasers of stock endorsing their stock certificates over to the Legion, but retain the note. While the Legion will have control of the fair there will be a mixed board of directors—that is, directors from both the Legion and citizens outside that organization.

It is also planned that the exhibitors at the fairs be limited to Livingston and adjoining counties, making seven in all. This will keep out the class of professional exhibitors.

Mr. Keck in speaking of the cooperation which the Legion will get from its members, said that already, the members of John Joda post had volunteered many hours of labor which they will give towards making repairs on the grounds.

Following Mr. Keck's explanation regarding the stock and its sale, there were several short talks, all of which were highly in accord with the plans as outlined.

It will be remembered that the local Legion post has in several instances been in charge of the Fourth of July celebrations and fair here, and each time these events were a marked success, both financially and as entertainments. The Legion has a fine working organization and they should be given every possible assistance in their efforts to again put the fair on its feet.

At a meeting Wednesday evening a committee of solicitors was organized, who will call on the people of this and adjoining communities to sell them stock. These solicitors should receive a ready response from the people as the stock offered has ample backing to protect them in every penny invested. The money derived from the sale of stock will be held in escrow in the local banks and should not enough stock be sold to put the plan across the money will be returned to the subscribers.

In his auto racing book, author James Whittington reported the American Legion bought the Fair fair property for $6,350 in 1936. This sales price would be equivalent to $150,330 in 2025 dollars.

In the June 5, 1936, issue of the Blade, it was reported there was a major fire at the fairgrounds as shown below.

Fire Yesterday Took
Fair Grounds Swine
Pavilion; Other Bldgs.

Loss Will Amount to Several Thou-
sand Dollars – N. J. Claudon Also
A Heavy Loser.

Yesterday afternoon at about 1:30 o'clock a destructive fire visited the fair grounds, burning the large swine pavilion, the poultry house filled with baled alfalfa hay, and a row of cattle sheds, sheep sheds, etc. In addition to burning these buildings several houses and barns were also jeopardized and it was only due to the fact that there was splendid fighting and hard work by the firemen and other citizens that they were saved. As it was the home of Mrs. Cora Evans adjoining the fair grounds on the east was scorched and shrubberies damaged. One of the neighboring residences, this one was in the greatest danger and the firemen devoted their attention principally to saving it during

the height of the conflagration at the swine pavilion. Numerous grass fires were started in this yard. The Mrs. Adam Hoker house caught fire from burning embers and the barn of Miss Louise Egle was damaged. The heat was so intense that it fairly cooked the garden truck in nearby gardens. Several people in the vicinity of Miss Egle's home saved their homes and other buildings by getting on top of them with garden hose. The horticultural building and the east end horse barn also caught fire but were put out by firemen.

The loss of buildings and contents alone will amount to several thousand dollars, to say nothing of irreparable loss to trees and shrubs.

N. J. Claudon was one of the heavy losers. For the past couple of months Mr. Claudon had rented the swine pavilion and several other buildings in that part of the fair grounds in which to house his livestock, but had moved none out but the latter part of May. In the poultry house he had stored about 25 tons of baled alfalfa hay, which he had not yet moved. This hay he valued at about $15 a ton, making a loss of $375. He also lost one practically new wagon, another wagon several years old, and the running gears of another wagon. This will make his loss about a thousand dollars with no insurance.

Also in the swine pavilion were stored an old Buick car and an old truck belonging to Indian Creek Golf club.

The fair grounds belong to the Fairbury State bank and the George Ott estate, and the buildings were partly covered with insurance.

The swine pavilion which was 84 by 120 feet, was built in 1922 at a cost of $4,400. It was composed of 150 individual pens, with a show ring in the center. During the 14 years it had been in use it had housed at various fairs some of the finest hogs in the country. It had also been used on many occasions to hold sales in. The poultry house, the sheep sheds and the stalls were old buildings, the stalls which extended south from the swine pavilion to the race track, having been there for many years. There were 96 of these stalls which were used for various animals exhibited at the fair.

While the fire was a hot and destructive one, still with the exception of the burning of the baled hay, it did not last over 15 minutes.

The blaze was discovered by P. H. Loughran, who lives just across the alley from the fair grounds. When seen by him the fire was in one of the stalls some 25 or 30 feet south of the swine pavilion. He went into the house to turn in the alarm and when he came out the fire had spread that rapidly that it had reached the swine pavilion. It was only a matter of a few minutes until this large building was a roaring mass of flames, with smoke rising in the air that could be seen for miles.

By the time the firemen arrived the whole building was in flames and the two leads of hose were used in keeping the flames from spreading to other buildings. The heat was so terrific that it kept the firemen and spectators at a distance.

The telephone and electric light wires that ran along the north end of the building were burned in two and the poles damaged.

Just how the fire started is not known, but as boys are prone to play around the grounds some think that they may have accidentally started it. Three boys stated that they could not be confirmed that there had been a bonfire started in the vicinity of the buildings.

Plans had been going forth for the past year or more to clean up and level out the grounds by a number of our citizens. Whether the fire will retard these negotiations or not is not known but it probably will give at least some of our public spirited citizens hope.

1936 photo of major fire at the fairgrounds. Black and white photo courtesy of James B. Munz. Colorized by Fotor.com.

1937

The Blade published an article announcing facility improvements planned for the 1937 Fairbury fair. Note the article mentioned the hog pavilion had burned prior to this fair.

Success of 4th Makes Further Repair Possible

Painting, Wiring, Floodlights, Show Lot Among Things to Be Finished Before 59th Exposition.

The officers of the Fairbury fair had a definite program of continued improvement activities laid out for accomplishment this summer. Part of the program was made

contingent to raising the money. Those in charge hoped to raise this money during the two-day Fourth of July celebration. They were not disappointed.

There are several projects that the fair management hopes to complete before the current exposition. Painting the amphitheatre and the judges' stand, installing flood lights in the infield, rewiring the grounds and continuing the service to the eastern section of the plot and the filling in of the ground where the hog pavilion burned, are on the program.

When the ground is filled in on the site of the razed hog pavilion it will be leveled, rolled and made suitable for a show ring. It is proposed to conduct all the livestock judging at this spot this year. The old horse barns in the east end of the grounds are rapidly being converted into a swine pavilion and it will be ready for exhibitors this year. Arrangements are also being made to take care of overflow entries in this class in tents to be situated adjacent to the new swine pavilion.

Since the fair management has adopted the policy of admitting and parking vehicles in the infield free of charge, the need of lights in that section of the grounds has become imperative. At the recent celebration several thousand autos were parked in the grounds and though they were parked orderly it was difficult for owners to get back to their machines after nightfall. Floodlights will be installed before the grounds are used again to facilitate car owners in getting to and from their machines.

Plans are also under way to handle the outbound traffic easier and faster during the rush hours. It is probable that the city will be asked to restrict parking on some streets during the fair in order that two lanes of traffic may leave the grounds simultaneously. The fair also hopes to have some aid from the state police department in handling traffic at the Third street intersection with Route 24. This service has been forthcoming in the past, but was not available during the two-day activity at the grounds recently.

Four great programs, packed with entertainment have been arranged for the night fair, and there has also been special thought given to their enjoyment. A loud speaker system has been arranged for so that all may hear as well as see. Trees have been removed so that the view is good from all parts of the grandstand. The fair management has gone further than this. The platform has been lowered and chairs will be placed on the track for the night show. For a slight additional fee those who desire to may sit in good comfortable seats, near the performers, and see and hear everything at close range.

All the improvements now under way are being made on a pay-as-you-go basis. This is a good policy for any organization. It means that the Fairbury fair is going to grow back into the fine, strong institution that it once was. While modes of life may change and activities may reach out farther and more distant horizons be revealed, still there is nothing that can take the place of the county fair.

It is the battle ground, gridiron, baseball diamond, or call it what you will, where the grain and stock growers, housewives, gardeners, dairymen and chicken fanciers meet in

competition to try their mettle and compare the fruits of their efforts. No, there is nothing to take its place.

Then, let's all of us give it a hand and help it along. Lots of fellows are giving every spare minute of their time to make it go. The least you can do is boost for it with a good word wherever you go. Come, and be sure to urge others to come. It is worth your while.

The Blade published a story about the free acts planned for the 1937 Fairbury fair.

Many Free Acts to Entertain Visitors at Fairbury Fair

To Intersperse Racing Program and Other Features — Miller Amusement Company on Midway.

When the Fairbury fair opens on Wednesday morning, August 25, the people are assured of four days and four nights of high class entertainment. Not least among the entertainment features are the free acts, for as usual the directors have engaged some high class performances.

Although the acts are all of high calibre "The Stratosphere Man" will probably head the list, especially when it comes to dispensing thrills. This is the highest trapeze and swaying pole act in the world. The height is 130 feet. The rigging is guyed up to 90 feet. Above this projects a 40-foot 2-inch steel tube pole on which "The Stratosphere Man" sways from side to side in numerous acrobatic positions. At night spotlights and flood lights making the showing of this act very spectacular. The finish of the act is a slide for life, the performer starting at a point 90 feet high and landing 500 feet away on the ground.

The Stiner Trio will present a comic twisting and somersaulting act. They are termed the wizards of the air.

A Spanish wire act will be presented by "Arzeno." It consists of juggling, baton spinning, balancing of objects, plate spinning, sharpshooting, etc., all done while balancing on a wire.

Another comedy act is that of the Three Macks, who present a whirlwind of acrobatic mirth.

For those who like animal acts, Vautelle's circus will be on hand to entertain them with dog acts, cat acts, monkey acts and the like.

The Fairbury band, which is noted for its high class music and which is always liberal with its selections, will be on hand every day and night of the fair.

The program of free acts will intersperse the fine racing program that has been carded for each day of the fair.

On the midway of the fair grounds and operating each afternoon and evening will be the Ralph Miller Amusement company. They have eight rides, including the latest, and seven shows. There will be free dancing each night to music furnished by Lee's Collegians.

1938 Fairbury Fair

The Blade announced the plans for the 1938 Fairbury fair.

Next Big Attraction Fairbury Fair August 24-27

Four Big Days and Nights With Plenty of Entertainment Every Minute.

The next big event for this section of the state is the Fairbury fair which will be held every day and night, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, August 24 to 27, inclusive.

The Fairbury fair has become popular far and wide for its many fine exhibits in cattle, horses, hogs and sheep and for the excellent entertainment it affords its patrons.

The entertainment this year promises to uphold the reputation the association has formed in past years. To start with, the Fairbury Municipal band will be on hand every afternoon and night during the four days to furnish a brand of music that cannot be surpassed.

The Blade used the banner below on their front page to announce the 1938 Fairbury fair.

Largest Circulation of Any Weekly Newspaper in Livingston County
PRICE $2.00 PER YEAR
FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 1938
SEVENTIETH YEAR.—No. 48
WELCOME to the FAIR

The Blade noted there were between 8,000 and 10,000 people at the 1938 Fairbury fair.

FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1938

They Packed 'em In on Thursday

Blade Photo.

This picture was taken Thursday when there were between eight and ten thousand people on the grounds. However, it was no unusual sight to see the grandstand filled to capacity during the 1938 fair. This picture was taken while one of the free acts was in progress and a number of people are standing on the track.

The Blade reported that the 1938 Fairbury fair was a big success.

Fairbury's Sixtieth Annual Fair a Successful One

Weather, Entertainment, Exhibits and Attendance Combine to Make It Outstanding.

The sixtieth annual Fairbury fair came to a close last Saturday night and it was a success from every point of view. To start with, the fair management could not have chosen four days during the past year when the weather was more ideal for a fair. Added to this was fine entertainment each afternoon and night, a large number of exhibits, and the attendance was about everything that could be desired, there being large crowds every day and night.

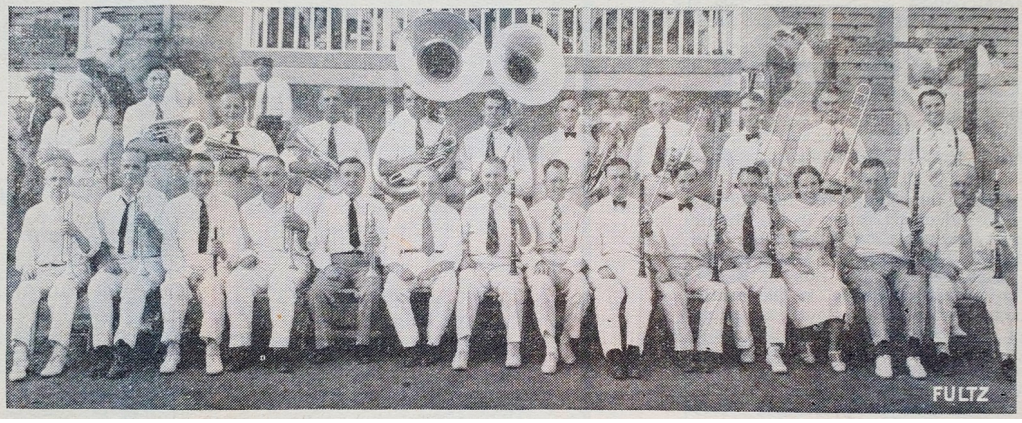
The total paid attendance at the main gate for the four days was 15,177. You could probably add another six or seven thousand to this for passes of various kinds and children under 12 years of age who were not charged admission. The big day, of course, was Thursday when 5,619 persons paid admission. The total paid admissions were divided as follows:

Wednesday 3,901
Thursday 5,619

Friday 3,404
Saturday 2,253

Total 15,177

Fairbury Municipal Band a Feature Attraction at the Fairbury Fair



The Fairbury Municipal band came into existence after the disbanding of the old Forrest-Fairbury band several years ago and largely as the result of the profound interest of J. J. McGreal in the development of instrumental activities in Fairbury and vicinity; of his dynamic interest in musical advancement in general and of his genuine love and devotion to music as a fine art.

Recognized today as one of the best bands in the state, having a permanent organization of 25 members, the personnel of which is made up of the outstanding musicians of the middle west, it has made an enviable name for itself.

Directed by Walter S. Mayhew since its organization, the band does not cater to commercial work and is strictly a concert band, having played summer engagements in Central park for several years, and conspicuously without any rehearsals. All of the programs are sponsored by the city of Fairbury for the benefit of the entire community at large.

Having just completed a successful series of concerts in Fairbury this summer, these superior musicians have been engaged to furnish musical entertainment each afternoon and evening in the grandstand at the 61st Fairbury fair, August 22, 23, 24 and 25, and will be one of the feature attractions.

The Pantagraph sent a photographer to the 1938 Fairbury fair. Three of the Pantagraph negatives are shown below.

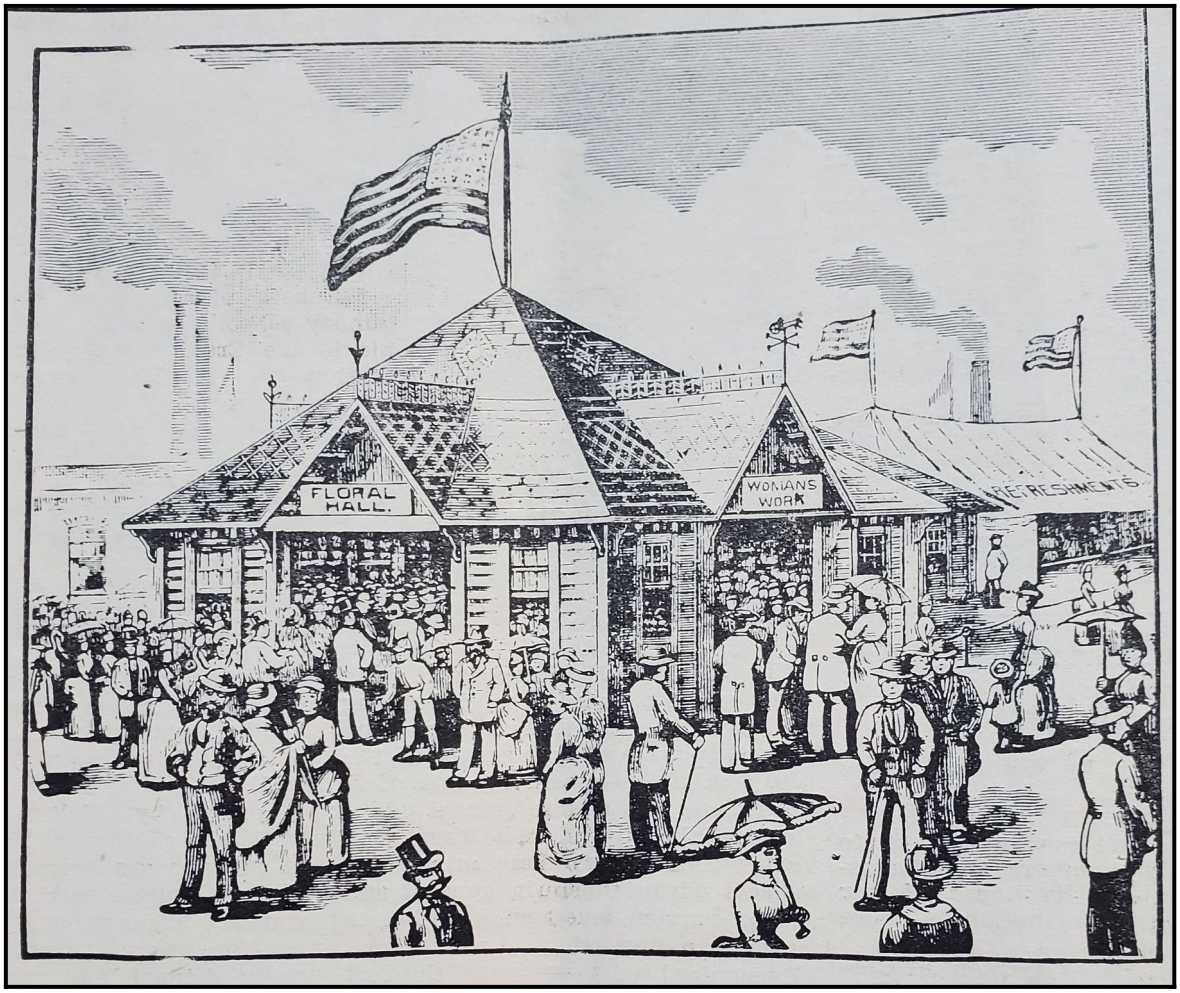
Children in the grandstand at the 1938 Fairbury Fair.

Children at the 1938 Fairbury Fair.

Harness racing at the 1938 Fairbury Fair.

1939

For this fair, the Blade made a reprint of Floral Hall from the 1890 Fairbury Fair Bulletin. It had a very neat illustration of what the Floral Hall looked like in 1890



Below this illustration was a description of events at the 1890 Fairbury fair.

THE

FLORAL · HALL

Will be the Cynosure of all eyes. There will be a surfeit of the best and most beautiful specimens of

WOMAN'S INDUSTRY & SKILL

TEXTILE FABRICS

KNITTING AND

FANCY WORK

The richest, the most laborious and costly, the handsomest and choicest masterpieces of

SKILL & ART IN NEEDLEWORK,

Thus making it a place to linger, study and admire the beautiful productions of woman's handiwork. Extra inducements will be offered to secure an exhibit of the most varied and valuable

DRAWINGS, ETCHINGS, PAINTINGS AND ENGRAVINGS, SCULPTURE AND CARVING

As well as a multitude of other exquisite gems of

CREATIVE · AND · DECORATIVE · FINE · ART,

Antiquities and Old and Valuable Keepsakes and Curiosities. There will be a generous profusion of

Rare and Costly Flowers and Plants
Fragrant Bouquets, Floral Ornaments and Designs

To these will be added

Musical Instruments, Sewing Machines,
Elegant and Costly Merchants' Displays, &c.

The sum total of all which will be an exhibition

REPLETE WITH EVERYTHING AGREEABLE TO THE EYE OF TASTE

The Hall will be trimmed and decorated with unusual artistic skill, and embellished with uncommonly rich and beautiful adornments, thus adding to the natural elegance and splendor of such an exhibition, a polished, refined and fascinating superiority.

Reproduced From Fairbury Fair Bulletin

On August 18, 1939, the Blade also published this neat old photo of horses and the horse barns from about 1890. The heading for this photo is “A Veteran Horse Family – One of Them Still Driving More than 50 Years Later.” The photo was very faded, so software was used to enhance and colorize it.

The caption for this photo is shown below.

> The Fairbury fair and the Fairbury fair grounds and the Merrill family have been closely associated with each other for more than a half century. The above picture was taken some 50-odd years ago, when the racing horse stalls extended east and west along the north side of the fair grounds, the above spot being the stables that were located where the women’s rest room now is.
>
> The picture shows a number of horses that were in training by the late Ben Merrill, and other members of the Merrill family are prominent in the picture. The youngster seated on a box is Percy Merrill; next to him to the right, holding a horse, is Don Merrill, deceased, and the boy astride the horse is Frank Merrill, who this week is taking part in the state fair races at Springfield. The young man holding the white horse at the left is Herb Walker, colored, now deceased, who was quite a horse man in his day.
>
> Frank Merrill drove his first race some 45 years ago. Among the horses the Merrills had in training at that time was Pearl Sherbert, owned by the late L. E. Broadwell and H. R. Bedell. Mr. Merrill, in contrast to the way they move race horses today with motor trucks, drove the horse overland to Monticello, where he won the race in which the horse was entered. Since then Mr. Merrill has driven in hundreds of races at the Fairbury fair and at other race meets, always taking his share of the prize money.
>
> Mr. Merrill is driving Single Prince and Jim Ripples at the state fair this week. These horses are owned by John McDonald, of Channon. Next week they will race at Crown Point, Ind., and the following week at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The Blade published a status report on the 1939 Fairbury fair.

Excellent Entertainment and Fine Exhibits Make Great Fair

Stock Exhibit a Show in Itself, With Almost a Thousand Head Listed—Other Exhibits, Races, Free Attractions Fill Out Programs.

With the weather man co-operating almost one hundred per cent, the sixty-first annual Fairbury fair got under way to a good start Tuesday morning and promises in every way to uphold the fine reputation of the association to give the people their money's worth in the large array of all kinds of exhibits and entertainment. The only place the weather man double-crossed President P. J. Keck and the other fair officials was on Tuesday evening. While the rain did not amount to much and the program went on as usual, there was just enough thunder and lightning to keep the attendance down.

The fair will close with Friday night's program. The race program this (Thursday) afternoon will consist of the 2:14 trot, the 2:21 pace, free-for-all pace, three-quarters mile run, and the half-mile consolation run.

On Friday afternoon the B. Ward Beams International Congress of Daredevils will present a thrilling program with automobiles and motorcycles.

The Fairbury band, the races, the free attractions and Pearson shows that line the midway, are furnishing everything in the way of amusements that can be desired. The Golden Gate Revue that occupied the stage Tuesday and Wednesday nights was deserving, with their varied program, of the highly favorable comment and applause they received.

The WLW Boone County Jamboree is scheduled for Thursday evening and B. Ward Beams is on the program for Friday night.

The attendance on Tuesday was around the usual opening day crowd, between twenty-five hundred and three thousand being present. Wednesday a large crowd was present, while Wednesday night there was an exceptionally large attendance.

The exhibit of livestock is an outstanding attraction at the fair and demonstrates better than anything else that the farmers and stock raisers are still going in for the better grades of cattle, horses, hogs and sheep. The entire east end of the fair grounds has the appearance of a circus, with large tents covering close to 50,000 square feet of ground. In these tents are housed almost a thousand head of livestock, or to be exact, 989 head. They are the cream of the livestock in this section of the country.

The swine entries, including all the well known breeds, number 431. Then there are 309 head of cattle. These include 121 head of dairy cattle, 100 head of beef cattle, the Jersey parish show has 63 head and the junior department 25 head.

The draft horses number 52 head, and the sheep 197 head. It is a wonderful exhibit and you will be missing something if you don't spend an hour or two looking them over.

Included in the livestock display is a Brown Swiss bull that tops the scales at 2,400 pounds. This ton and almost a half of beef flesh is the property of the Carlock Alfalfa Knoll farm.

The poultry display this year is an exceptionally large one, with 436 birds entered.

1940 Fairbury Fair

The Blade headline for the 1940 Fairbury fair is shown below.

The Fairbury Blade

Dedicated to the Interests of the People of the Fairbury Community and Neighbors

FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 1940

SEVENTY-SECOND YEAR.—NO. 48

WELCOME TO FAIRBURY FAIR

Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

AUGUST
27-28
29-30

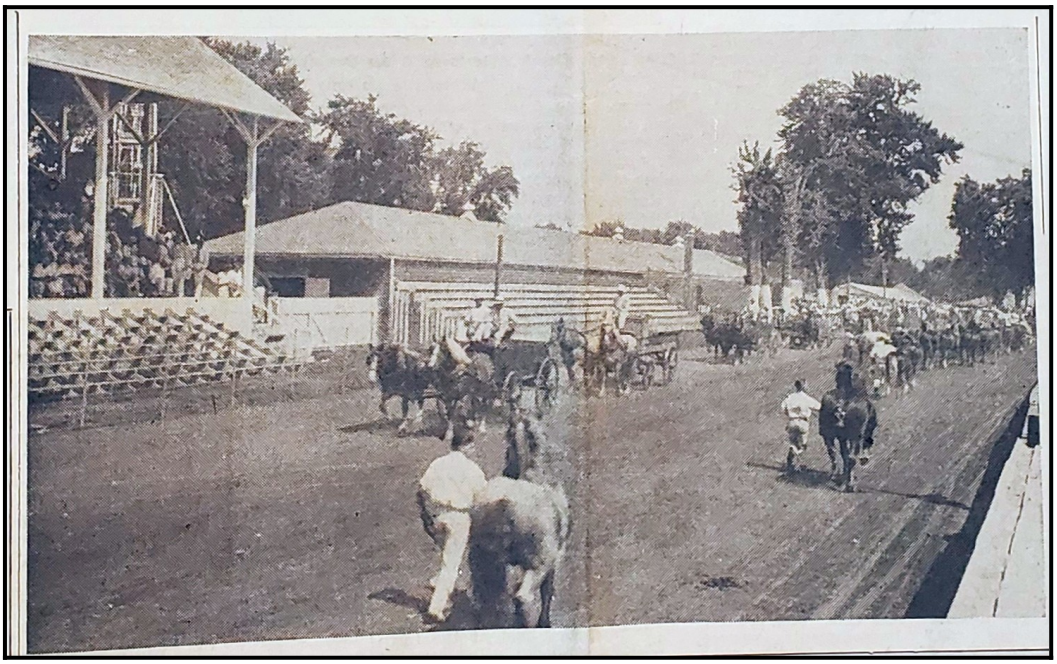
Blade Subscription, Season Ticket $2.25

To Our Advertisers and Correspondents

62th Annual Fair Will Get Under Way Tuesday

A Few Snap Shots
on A Trip
Elwood, Ind.

Just the grandstand image is shown below.



The Blade described the upcoming Fairbury fair.

Fairbury Fair Free Attractions to Be Outstanding

A Varied Program to Be Presented Each Afternoon—Special Attractions at Night.

With the sixty-second annual Fairbury fair only a couple of weeks off, our readers no doubt will be interested in the free entertainment that will be offered the thousands who will attend this event which is being held August 27–30 inclusive.

The free acts program will be a varied one, with a dog circus, skating acts, trapeze acts and other exceptional attractions. The Fairbury Municipal band, which in years past has given such general satisfaction, will furnish the musical programs each day.

The Delores Dogs are an especially fine group of trained animals that have been featured as special attractions in many of the large theatres and best fairs of the country. Skating Wizards, known as the Four Flashes, are an attraction that will thrill the people, as will also the triple trapeze act, which is something new in this kind of entertainment.

Starring Miss Mary Donnell is the Imperial Four Adagio Quartet. This group has also been featured at numerous fairs and at the best theatres throughout the United States, being acclaimed as the best in their line of entertainment. A novelty hand balancing, head-to-head balancing and acrobatic act is given by Pedro and Luis, who are termed “the Mexican Sensations” wherever they have appeared. Their itinerary has taken them to the principal cities of America and Europe.

On the opening day, Tuesday will be featured Dick Rogers’ All-American Motor Maniacs in a series of daredevil automobile and motorcycle events that furnish thrills aplenty. They will also present the night attraction with a complete change of program.

On Wednesday night is the Joe J. Smith Revue, on Thursday night the Pontiac Gym Circus, and on Friday night WLS National Barn Dance.

The John B. Ward Shows will be on the midway each afternoon and night with many shows and rides.

Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

Photographs from the 1990s

CHAPTER 10

1941 to 1950

1941

The Blade reported on the activities at the 1941 Fairbury fair.

> **Rodeo Booked for Two Performances Next Sunday**
>
> **Wild West Organization, Rained Out Last Sunday, Here Afternoon and Evening.**
>
> The Selby-McKinley Rodeo, which was billed by John Joda post, American Legion, for two exhibitions at the Fairbury fair grounds last Sunday afternoon and evening, and which was rained out, has been booked for next Sunday, August 24, and the afternoon performance will begin at 3 o'clock (DST), and the evening performance at 8:30.
>
> The rodeo showed to a good sized and well pleased crowd here Saturday evening, and the large number of people who saw the show have been good publicity agents, with the result that large crowds will undoubtedly be on hand to witness the two performances next Sunday.
>
> Two features of the rodeo which pleased the crowd immensely last Saturday night are Floyd Pitzer and his educated horse Blue Desert, and Frank Littlebear and his trained mule Joe. The intelligence and performance of this horse and this mule are remarkable and their parts alone make the show well worth seeing. Blue Desert has been shown in many of the largest rodeos and high class horse shows in the United States and Frank Littlebear and "Joe" furnished comedy entertainment during the entire show. Geneva Jones exhibited her spotted horse in a very fine high school act and she was also featured in trick and fancy riding.
>
> Other features of the rodeo are bronco riding, Brahma steer riding, bulldogging, calf roping and numerous other acts. Trick and fancy ropers and Australian bull whip crackers help to round out the entertainment.
>
> The rodeo carries fifty head of stock, including twenty head of full-blood Brahma cattle and twenty head of bucking horses, some of which are professional contest horses.

1942 and 1943 Fairbury Fairs

About three months after the 1941 Fairbury Fair, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, initiating World War II. Fairbury supported the World War II effort by sending many men and women to serve in the military. Fairbury businesses sold war bonds, and local citizens bought them to finance the war. Rationing of many commodities, including food, gasoline, and tires, was introduced to support the war effort. Numerous scrap drives were conducted to collect metal, which could be reprocessed into military weapons.

Because of the World War II effort, the decision was made not to have Fairbury Fairs in 1942 and 1943. On June 6, 1944, D-Day, the most massive amphibious attack in the history of the world, was successfully conducted by Allied Forces. Because the war was going well by the summer of 1944, the decision was made to hold a 1944 Fairbury Fair.

Because it had been three years since the last Fairbury Fair, the event organizers wanted to put on a spectacular show. They booked a previous act that had been very popular with fair-goers, B. Ward Beam's International Congress of Daredevils. Some of their thrillers included the "Dive Bomber Crash," "Tunnel of Fire," and "Dynamite Drive," which involved crashing into a solid brick wall with an auto. Several dancing companies were also booked as entertainment and a female skating act called "the Rollateers."

1944

The Blade published an article examining how first year Fair President, Mr. Tarpy, was doing on his job.

Heads Fairbury Fair

M. E. TARPY, President.

Fair Items Picked Up Here and There

This is M. E. Tarpy's first year as fair president and he is doing a fine job as its head. He has labored both as an executive and at manual labor being on hand at every work day. He tells the following story on himself as to driving a stake for one of the tents: After he had used a sledge for some time in an endeavor to get the stake down, an interested spectator who had been watching his efforts, said he had better quit as about all the results that were visible were that he was wearing off the top of the stake.

G. H. Decker, who is one of the big cogs in making the wheels of the Fairbury fair go round, has been secretary of the fair for 23 years. That is one of the reasons why he knows all the answers to the thousand and one questions that come up.

P. J. Keck, president of the fair for a number of years after the Legion took it over, is one of those taking an active interest and an active part in the 1944 fair. His past experience comes in handy to the present officers in helping to solve various questions that come up.

B. Ward Beam's Daredevils, who furnished the amusement at the fair the opening day, came here from Bangor, Maine, where they show two days of the seven-day fair. They gave their show at Bangor Sunday and then hopped on a train for Fairbury. Following their exhibition here Tuesday night they left immediately on the return trip to Bangor to finish up their performance in that city.

The northeast part of the grounds where the livestock is quartered is a sea of tents. To be exact there are 45,375 square feet of tents covering the hundreds of animals and used as show rings. The largest of these tents is 260 feet long and 40 feet wide. Another is 240×40, two are 160x40, another is 150x40 and so on, and they literally cover that section of the fair grounds.

One of the exhibits that is attracting lots of attention is the state department of conservation on the midway. In one of the pens along with a swan and some mallard ducks are various species of pheasants, including the Chinese golden, the silver, the English ringneck and the Lady Amherst pheasant. In another cage is a pair of horned owls and in another cage are some Bob White quail, while one cage has the great American eagle as its occupant. Still another cage contains a skunk, but you can get as close to it as you wish as it has been rendered innocuous. In another cage is a red fox. It makes an interesting exhibit.

The fair has been enjoying real fair weather—that is, it has been hot. It was hot Tuesday and hotter Wednesday; but as we stated, it is real fair weather.

H. E. Kirk, of Anderson, Ind., is starter of the harness races and gives good satisfaction. The judges are H. E. Carter and E. P. Wilson, and the timers are H. B. Bedell, E. P. Compton and Joe Hagen. Jim Broalwell, who is superintendent of speed, also is clerk of the course. Henry Metz is racing steward.

The Bunting shows with their concessions, shows and rides occupy most of the midway and they are doing a big business.

Among those having interesting exhibits of farm machinery on the grounds is Chris Leman, who is showing Case farm machinery.

The White Horse Troupe which exhibits here Friday night, came to the fair early, arriving here on Sunday. They showed at the fair at South Bend, Ind., last week and had an open date between that fair and the Fairbury fair.

Tuesday saw the largest opening day crowd in the history of the fair. Tuesday afternoon there was a big crowd and Tuesday night the people filled the grandstand to capacity and they overflowed all over the ground. The B. Ward Beam's Daredevils were the attraction.

1945

The Blade published the following article about the 1945 Fairbury fair.

Fairbury Fair gets Underway on Tuesday

Four Days and Four Nights of Entertainment; Racing, Free Acts, Exhibits.

Next Tuesday morning at seven o'clock the big event for this part of the country the Fairbury fair will get under way. It will officially close following the Society Horse Show next Friday night but the chances are the people will be milling around patronizing the various stands and rides and the dance hours after the horse show is over and the horses have been put to bed.

There's only one thing like a county fair and that's a county fair. A place where old friends meet, a place where all are interested whose hog took the champion ribbon or whose bull headed the premium winners; a place where the bedspreads, the cookies, the breads and jams are looked over with mutual interest and where everybody takes pride in what the other person is doing.

The Fairbury fair is just that and in addition to the many exhibits and the personal interest shown, there are four days and nights of fun and entertainment for everyone.

The Bunting Shows with their numerous rides and shows will occupy the midway all four days and nights, and the Fairbury Municipal band will also be there to entertain you every day and evening. Outside of that, there is a change of program each day.

The main attraction on the opening day, Tuesday, is the WLS White Horse Troupe, which will show both afternoon and evening.

On Wednesday afternoon and night the WLS "Hello Neighbors" program will be the principal attraction in front of the grandstand. It stars Lulu Belle and Scotty and a stage full of entertainers. The three days' racing program also starts Wednesday.

Sandwiched between the heats of the racing program on Thursday and Friday are some fine free acts. These include the Don Cossacks, horsemen supreme; V-Roy the magician, and company; the Zoppi troupe, presenting a thrilling act on high unsupported ladders, and O'Brien and O'Day, the famous roller skating artists.

On Thursday and Friday nights will be the Society Horse Show, when the best saddle and light harness horses will compete for $3,000 in premiums. You will see nothing finer in these classes no matter where you might go.

The Fairbury fair has always attracted the best in livestock and the entries in cattle, hogs, sheep, etc., right now indicate that this year will be no exception. The Future Farmers of America alone will have approximately a thousand head of livestock in their exhibit, while another attraction in this line will be the Jersey Parish Show.

And one thing you won't want to miss is the Million Dollar Parade of livestock next Thursday afternoon at four o'clock.

For education, entertainment and pleasure you can't do better than attend the Fairbury fair all four days.

Three Pantagraph negatives from the 1945 Fairbury fair are shown as follows.

Three boys admiring the model airplanes at the 1945 Fairbury Fair.

Mrs. Chester Morrison and Mrs. Elmer Crough cooking at the 1945 Fairbury Fair.

Horse racing at the 1945 Fairbury Fair.

1946

The Blade published the following article about this fair.

Varied Program of Attractions For Fair

The program of free acts for the Fairbury fair is a varied one, running from a troupe of trained dogs to trained elephants.

Hill's elephants put on one of the fastest and quickest moving acts in the outdoor show business. They go through an intricate program that the youngest child or the oldest person can appreciate. Then there are 12 well trained dogs, who perform difficult stunts. Then again there are the Hill's educated ponies, an attraction that is a show in itself.

Those who like to see stunts in the air will appreciate the Senior-ettes, who swing and fly through space with an ease and grace that bewilders as well as entertains.

The St. Clair Sisters and O'Day would be outstanding on any program of entertainment. They are a comedy group on unicycles and bicycles. Every minute of their act is filled with newness and surprises.

No program would be complete without a musical team. For your entertainment along this line the fair management has secured The Ballantines, the N.B.C. harmonica team. It is a high class musical act.

On the midway there will be the Imperial Shows, with rides, concessions and shows.

The Blade also published this story about the 1946 Fairbury fair.

Fairbury's Annual Fair Will be Held Here Next Week

Four Days, Four Nights of Entertainment; Horse Racing, Horse Show, Midget Racing.

Fairbury's annual fair gets under way next Tuesday morning and there will follow four days and nights of the best in diversified entertainment, closing with the midget auto races on Friday night. And in speaking of the midget races, the greatest array of cars and the best drivers in the country will be seen here that night. The reason for this is that the local track is the only one operating in this section of the country that night and midget drivers and their cars from every section will be here.

The work of turning the east side of the grounds into a sea of tents will start today. These tents will house the hundreds of heads of livestock which will be exhibited.

There will be three divisions of the horse show, starting Tuesday afternoon. Tuesday night will be the "Balalaika Revue," with the second and third sections of the Society Horse Show Wednesday and Thursday nights.

The harness and running race program gets under way on Wednesday afternoon. There will be three harness races and a running race that afternoon and a like program on

Thursday. Friday afternoon the program calls for two running races and two harness races.

On the platform in front of the grandstand will be seen the Senior-ettes, performing high in the air; Hill's educated dogs, trained elephants and ponies; the St. Claire Sisters and O'Day, on unicycles and bicycles, and the Ballantines, the National Broadcasting harmonica team.

One of the features this year will be the flower show. It is under the management of the garden department of the Fairbury Woman's club.

Outstanding at every Fairbury fair is the livestock exhibit, and this year will be no exception. The big parade of livestock will be Thursday afternoon at four o'clock.

If one is to judge from the entries coming in for all departments, the 1946 Fairbury fair will top them all. Reports from the superintendent of speed, Wallace Hemphill; Edward Erdman, superintendent of heavy horses, and Raymond Grover, superintendent of the Society Horse Show, indicate these departments will be a fine show in themselves.

The Fairbury Municipal band will be present each afternoon and night of the fair. And on the midway will be the Imperial Shows with concessions, rides and shows.

Make your plans now to attend every session. Most any business house in Fairbury has season tickets. Buy a season ticket and save money.

Child with a balloon at the 1946 Fairbury Fair. Pantagraph negative.

1947

The Blade announced the plans for the 1947 Fairbury fair.

The Fairbury Fair Is the Next Big Local Event

To Be Held August 19 Through 22, Day and Night; Many Premiums Offered.

The next big event for the people of Fairbury and this part of the state is the Fairbury fair, to be held Tuesday through Friday, August 19-22, with complete day and night programs throughout the four days.

Each afternoon there will be a race program, band concert by the Fairbury Municipal band, together with a number of high class platform performances. The society horse show will be held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, with the midget races occupying the oval in front of the grandstand on the last night—Friday.

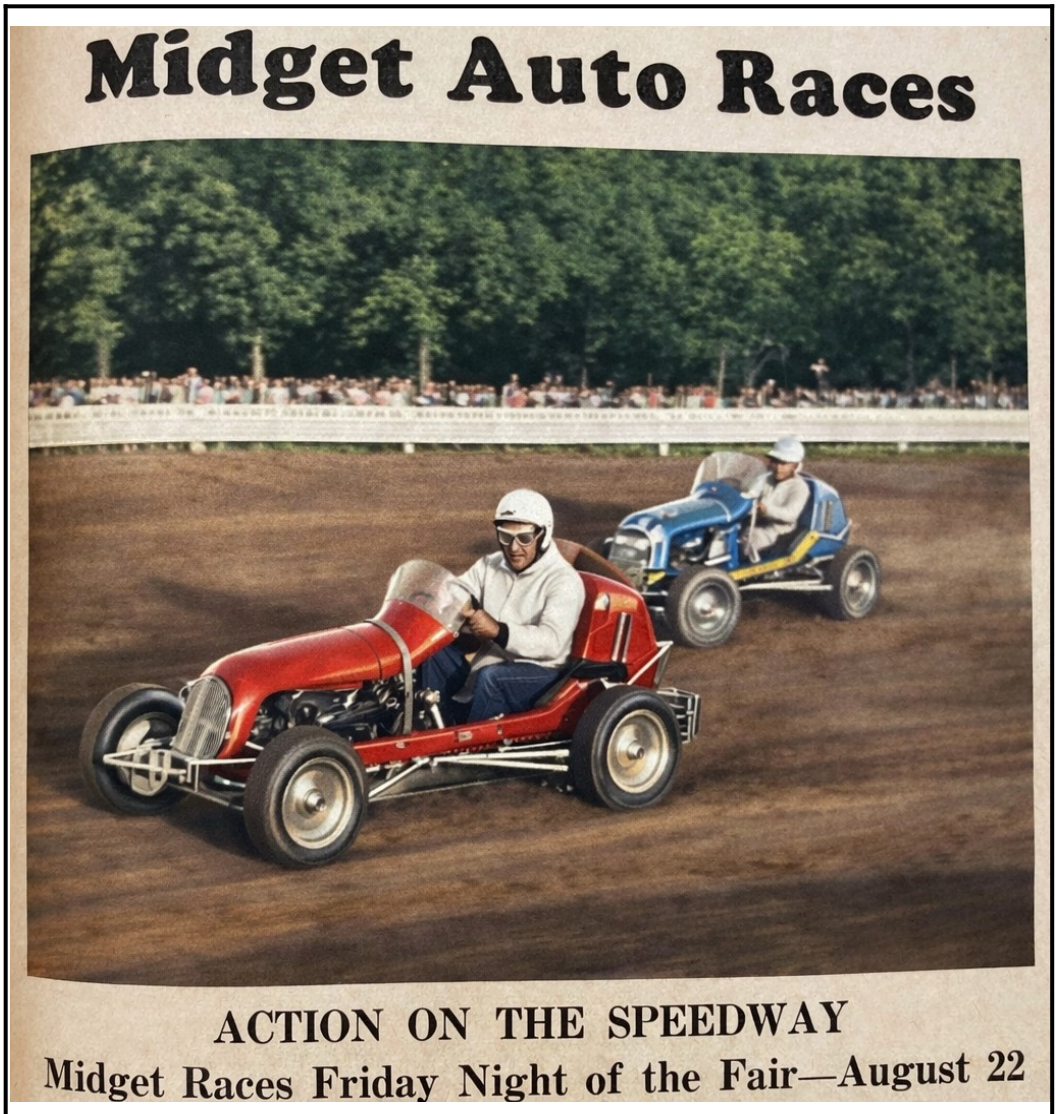
Among the attractions to be presented for the entertainment of the large crowds who will be present are: The Tripoli Trio, singing and instrumental trio of unusual ability; Maree and Pals, including Lindy, the wonder dog; Hank, the unridable mule, and other pets that do a most entertaining act; The Flying Valentines, who have a flying trapeze act that is outstanding in entertainment of its class, and The Sidneys, the sensational cyclists, who present feature tricks and perfection in balance.

These groups present a varied program that will please everyone.

A total of $11,950.75 is offered in premiums for livestock, poultry, agricultural products, products of dairy and kitchen, needlework and displays. That amount of premium money should attract the best in the country.

In addition to the premium money the fair is giving $6,500 in purses for the four-day racing program. Included in the ten events are six stake races, with a purse of $750 for each race. The other four races are for $500 each.

The above program promises to give the people who attend the 1947 Fairbury fair four of the best days and nights entertainment they have enjoyed in a long time.



The original black and white Blade photo was very poor quality. AI software was used to repair the image and colorize it.

★ FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 1947

Trophies for Society Horse Show Winners

The above trophies will be presented by Fairbury merchants to the winners of the various classes at the Society Horse Show at the Fafrbury fair. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

The Society Horse Shows were very popular at the Fairbury Fair. Many trophies were issued to the winners.

1948

The Blade reported on the plans for the 1948 Fairbury fair.

Fairbury Fair to Offer Many New Features

To Open August 24 For Four Days; Midget Races To Be Held Friday Night.

The 72nd annual Fairbury fair will open its gates Tuesday, August 24, at 7 a.m., and continue on through Friday night. With almost three weeks remaining before the opening day, all plans are completed or nearing completion.

The entertainment division has been taken care of well. On the midway, of course, will be the carnival, with a wide assortment of rides to suit every age group. Slow ones for the

young, fast ones for the adventurous, and faster ones for those who have their insurance paid up.

Then there will be booths offering both games of chance and skill, for those who feel their luck is "bound to change sometime."

An exciting grandstand program has been arranged, and cries different than "walk your horses" will echo from the arena. On Tuesday evening, the first night of the fair, Ward Beam's hard-riding crew of Hollywood stunt men will thrill the audience with such death-defying stunts as crashing through a brick wall and crashing into an automobile with a motorcycle at seventy miles an hour.

Friday evening will see the return of those mighty little midgets, as the best drivers of the country return to the oval to do battle. All the favorite stars that appear in Fairbury on the regular Wednesday night racing card will be present. These races have continually been getting faster and more hotly contested as the season has progressed, and spurred on by the usually large and enthusiastic crowd that attends the last night of the fair, the races will be even more thrilling.

Bob Maurer gave a presentation to the Fairbury Rotary Club. An excerpt from his presentation was printed in the Blade.

Puts Fairbury on Map

"The fair takes the work of the entire community to make it a success," Mr. Maurer said, giving credit to the Rotary for the support its members give the fair. Mr. Maurer said he used to think the fair was a money making proposition, but now he realizes the fair is a community institution that may make money one year, and may lose it the next, but helps put Fairbury on the map, thereby aiding the entire community, and furnishing a place of enjoyment for those who attend and participate.

1949

The Blade published the plans for the 1949 Fairbury fair.

New Junior Department Is Open to All Boys and Girls In State of Illinois.

The 73rd Fairbury fair will .open its gates Tuesday, August 23, and continue on through Friday night, August 26,, As an added incentive for those who plan to place exhibits in the fair, Robert Maurer, secretary of the fair, this week disclosed that a grand total of $17,486 is being offered in premiums and prizes. Some of this money will be awarded in a new department of the fair, the Junior department. This is open to any boy and girl under 21 years of age in the state of Illinois, and will offer competition in livestock, canning, cookery and wearing apparel.

This Junior department will be operated in the same manner as the adult class, with prize money and ribbons awarded to the winners in each class. In the adult class a total of 16 departments will be judged during the first two days of the fair. This includes, besides cattle, hogs and sheep, draft team and hitch, domestic arts, agriculture, poultry, culinary and others. Some of the highlights listed on the fair program, with still three weeks remaining before the fair, including three full days of racing, both harness and running, the judging of livestock and exhibits Tuesday and Wednesday, the grand parade of prize winning livestock at 7 p. m. on Thursday; Lucky Lot and his Hell Drivers; the Boyle Woolfolk Summer Sensations of 1949, and the Imperial Shows carnival on the midway.

As a grand climax to the fair, the American Automobile Association will sanction the midget auto races to be held on Friday night. The A.A.A., which attracted 3,500 here a week ago, should, be the chief factor in breaking last year's grandstand closing night attendance of 3,315.

The 1949 Fairbury fair also featured some “big name” auto race drivers per the Blade.

Closing Feature of Fair

As the closing feature of the fair, the American Legion Speedway will have an infield full of drivers who have made names for themselves all over the nation in the A. A. A. circuit. They will take to the track Friday evening, August 26, as the last feature of the four day program.

Although all A. A. A. drivers are known nation-wide for the dare-devil speed and enduring, which was proven here at the races July 20, perhaps the more illustrious of them all is yet to race here, which he will do next Friday. He is “Jittery Johnny” Parsons, of Van Nuys, California.

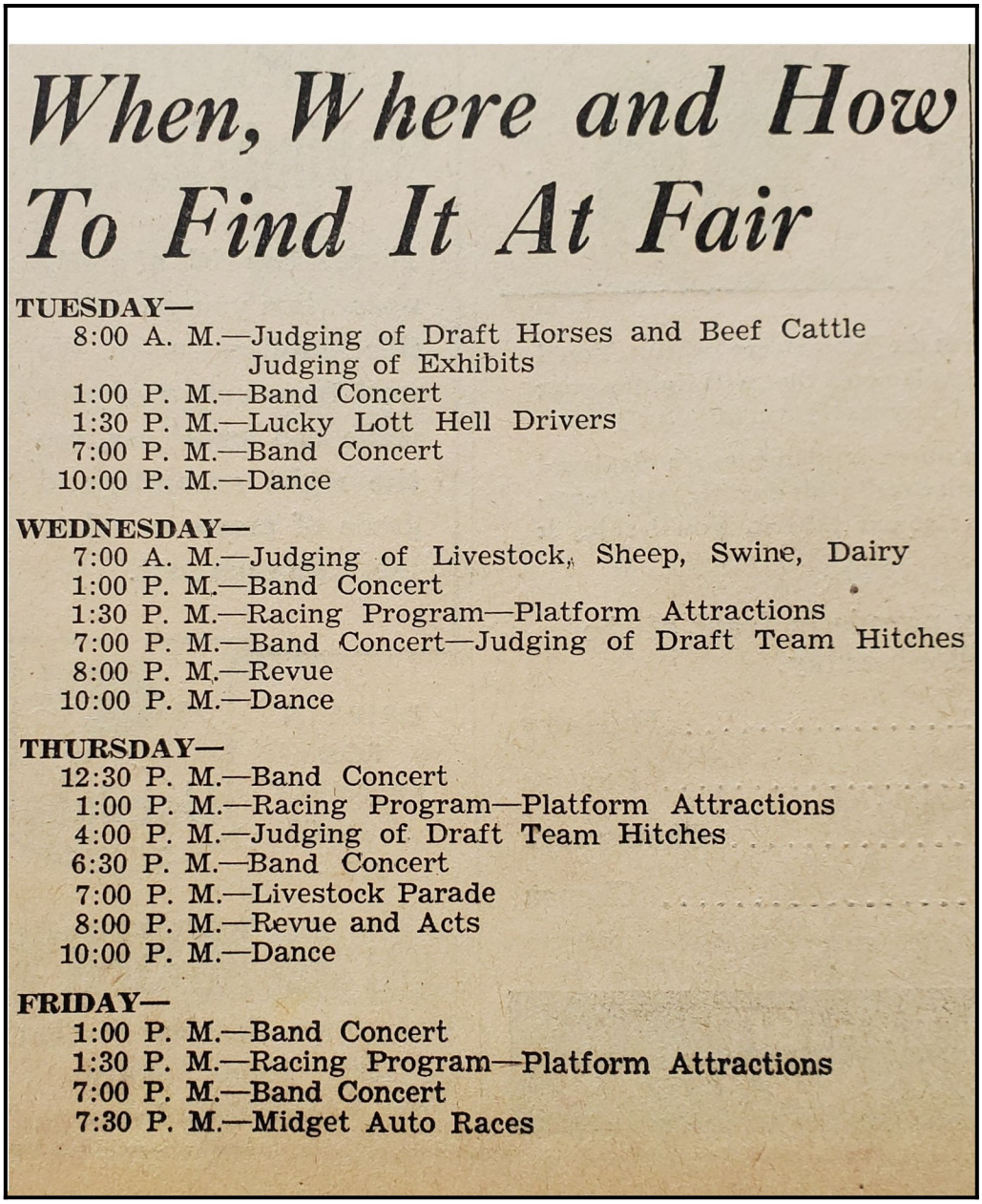
Parsons, who draws his nickname “Jittery Johnny” due to his outward nervousness, will be one of the Indianapolis Speedway drivers attracted here by the fast and well known track and the large and appreciative audiences that attend the Legion Speedway. Saturday he will enter the 100-mile championship race at Springfield and Sunday he will race in the 200-miler at Milwaukee.

As a freshman driver in the “500” this year, Johnny set a new record for both a rear-drive and a four-cylinder car when he qualified in 132.900. It was the second fastest time turned in this year and the third fastest in Speedway history.

Joining Parsons here will be Tony Bettenhausen, Frank Burany, Mike O’Halloran, Jimmy Hicks, Danny Kladis, Gus Klingbiel, Ted Duncan, Ray Knepper, Sam Hanks, Gordon Reid, Mel Hansen, and Chuck Stevenson, among others.

Burany won the July 20 40-lapper here. Reid and Kneper are at present running one-two in Chicago-Mississippi Valley points for dirt tracks.

The complete program for the fair will be found elsewhere on this page, and an explanation of the fine state exhibits at another spot in the Blade.



When, Where and How To Find It At Fair

TUESDAY—
8:00 A. M.—Judging of Draft Horses and Beef Cattle
Judging of Exhibits
1:00 P. M.—Band Concert
1:30 P. M.—Lucky Lott Hell Drivers
7:00 P. M.—Band Concert
10:00 P. M.—Dance

WEDNESDAY—
7:00 A. M.—Judging of Livestock, Sheep, Swine, Dairy
1:00 P. M.—Band Concert
1:30 P. M.—Racing Program—Platform Attractions
7:00 P. M.—Band Concert—Judging of Draft Team Hitches
8:00 P. M.—Revue
10:00 P. M.—Dance

THURSDAY—
12:30 P. M.—Band Concert
1:00 P. M.—Racing Program—Platform Attractions
4:00 P. M.—Judging of Draft Team Hitches
6:30 P. M.—Band Concert
7:00 P. M.—Livestock Parade
8:00 P. M.—Revue and Acts
10:00 P. M.—Dance

FRIDAY—
1:00 P. M.—Band Concert
1:30 P. M.—Racing Program—Platform Attractions
7:00 P. M.—Band Concert
7:30 P. M.—Midget Auto Races

1950

The Blade reported on the plans for the 1950 Fairbury fair.

All Departments Now Filled; Tentage To Go Up Today.

Fair secretary Bob Maurer reported yesterday that all departments are well-filled, well-balanced and ready for the opening of the Fair on Tuesday.

Entries of livestock exhibits closed Tuesday, with the deadline for all other exhibits set for today.

Activity at the Fairgrounds is, of course, increasing day by day. Legionnaires held a work day at the grounds, Sunday, at which time the Legion lunch stand began to take shape and other general work done. Floral hall and barns were cleaned, and ready for occupancy. Another work day is scheduled for Sunday.

Setting up of the tents was expected to begin today, with the carnival equipment probably moving in Sunday and setting up Monday.

The fair will open officially at 7:00 a. m. Tuesday. Both Tuesday and Wednesday morning will be given over to the judging of the 15 various departments. Beef cattle, poultry, agricultural products, flowers, domestic arts, dairy and culinary products will be judged Tuesday morning, beginning at 8 o'clock. Dairy cattle, sheep, and swine will be judged Wednesday morning.

Headlining the program Tuesday afternoon and evening will be Hoaglan's Hippodrome and Thrill Circus, an act that brings back the famous old-times chariot races and the thrilling Roman riding races, where the rider stands on two horses and rides at full speed.

The afternoon program for the final four days will consist of running races, with an exceptional field of horses ready to run for the $4,300 total purse. Six races each afternoon except Saturday will be run, with the 1⅛-mile derby, carrying a purse of $400, added to the program Saturday.

Other major attractions on the program include the Grand Ole Opry on Wednesday night, featuring Roy Acuff, the "King of Mountain Music." On Thursday and Friday nights the 1950 Summer Follies dance revue will take over in front of the grandstand with a new and entertaining repertoire.

Saturday night the stock car races take top spot. Although definite plans have not been made, race officials have stated that a special relay race may be run between the top six cars of the circuit. Each car would have six drivers, with each driver turning a certain amount of laps before changing drivers. This would be in addition to the regular full program.

Chuck Granger and his orchestra will supply the music for the nightly dance on the outdoor pavilion. Dancing will be between 10 and 12 o'clock each evening except Saturday, when no dance will be held.

Fair officials have stated that the entire grounds will be sprayed again this year to make the area as free from flies and other objectionable insects as possible.

A complete schedule of fair activities is to be found elsewhere on the front page.

Fairbury Fair Program

Tuesday

8:00 A. M.—Judging of exhibits. Beef cattle, poultry, agricultural products, flowers, domestic arts, dairy & culinary products.
1:00 P. M.—Band concert.
1:30 P. M.—Hoaglan's Hippodrome.
7:00 P. M.—Band concert.
7:30 P. M.—Hoaglan's Hippodrome.
10:00 P. M.—Dance.

Wednesday

8:00 A. M.—Judging of exhibits. Dairy cattle, sheep and swine.
1:00 P. M.—Band concert.
1:30 P. M.—Horse racing program. Platform attractions.
6:30 P. M.—Band concert.
7:30 P. M.—Roy Acuff and the Grand Ole Opry.
10:00 P. M.—Dance.

Thursday

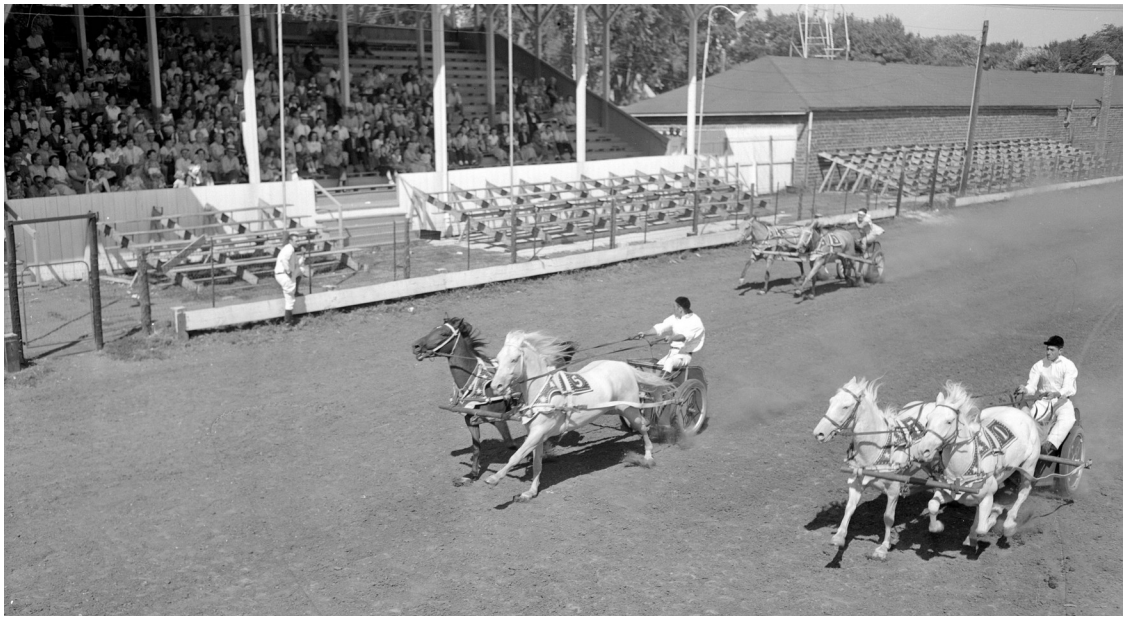
1:00 P. M.—Band concert.
1:30 P. M.—Horse racing program. Platform attractions.
6:30 P. M.—Band concert.
7:00 P. M.—Livestock parade.
8:00 P. M.—Summer Follies of 1950 Revue and Acts.
10:00 P. M.—Dance.

Friday

1:00 P. M.—Band concert.
1:30 P. M.—Horse racing program. Platform attractions.
7:00 P. M.—Band concert.
8:00 P. M.—Summer Follies of 1950 Revue and Acts.
10:00 P. M.—Dance.

Saturday

1:00 P. M.—Band concert.
1:30 P. M.—Horse racing program. Platform attractions.
7:00 P. M.—Band concert.
7:30 P. M.—Stock car races.



Hoagland's Hippodrome Thrill Circus at the 1950 Fairbury Fair. Pantagraph negative.

CHAPTER 11

1951 to 1960

1951

In March of 1951, the Pantagraph reported that a new horse barn would be in place for the 1951 Fairbury Fair.

> **To Have New Barn For Fairbury Fair**
>
> FAIRBURY – (PNS) – Fairbury Fair Board Association members gave final approval Tuesday night for construction of a new barn on the west end of the fairgrounds just east of the large horse barn.
>
> Joe U. Slagel, board president, said the new structure will be 50 by 180 feet, of shell construction with a double roof of sheet metal. The building will be used to house the cattle exhibit.

In August of 1951, the Pantagraph published an ad for the Fairbury fair.

FAIRBURY FAIR

FIVE DAYS — FIVE NIGHTS

August 21-25, 1951

HORSE RACING

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday Afternoons

105 RODEO

30 Cowboys and Cowgirls — 60 Head of Stock
Tuesday Afternoon and Evening

B. WARD BEAM'S

World Champion Auto Daredevils
Wednesday Night Only

HUGE STAGE SHOW

Beautiful Girls . . . Music . . . Acts
Thursday Night Only

GWYNNE THE MAGICIAN

Internationally Known as the Successor to Blackstone
Full Company of Assistants . . . 1½ Hours of Mystification
Friday Night Only

STOCK CAR RACES

Saturday Night

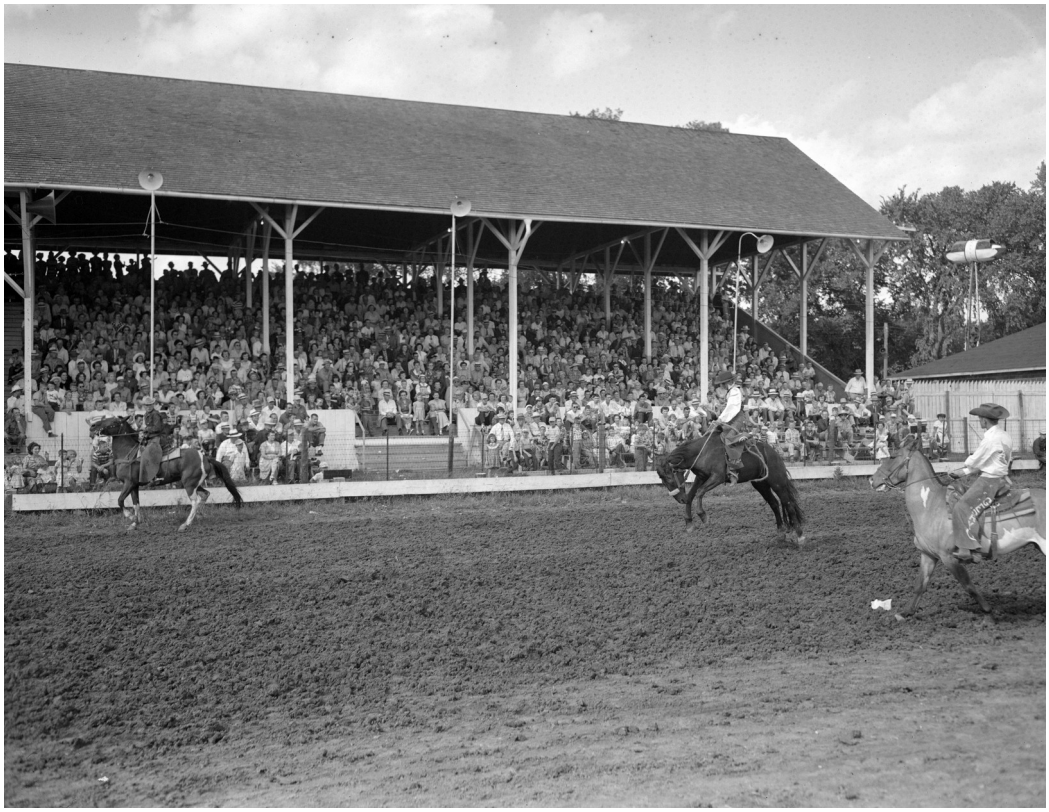
DANCING

9:00-12:00 P. M.—Tuesday Through Friday

HUGE CARNIVAL

MILLION DOLLAR LIVESTOCK PARADE

1951 Fairbury fair.



Rodeo at the 1951 Fairbury Fair. Pantagraph negative

1952

In August of 1952, the Pantagraph reported the 1952 Fairbury fair would have a special attraction.

1952 Fairbury Fair Ready; Add Exhibit

FAIRBURY – (PNS) – Plans are now complete for the Fairbury Fair which opens Tuesday. Entries closed Tuesday.

Several of the race horses are now at the fair grounds and are getting ready for the running races which will be held each afternoon of the Fair.

Another special feature of the 1952 Fairbury Fair, recently announced for the five day program, is the appearance of an air exhibit from Chanute Air Force Base at Rantoul. The display includes a captured German "buzz" bomb of the type used against England in the closing days of World War II, cutaways of a jet engine and reciprocating engine, and also a cross-section sampling of survival equipment used by airmen.

The exhibit will come to Fairbury direct from the State Fair which closes Sunday.

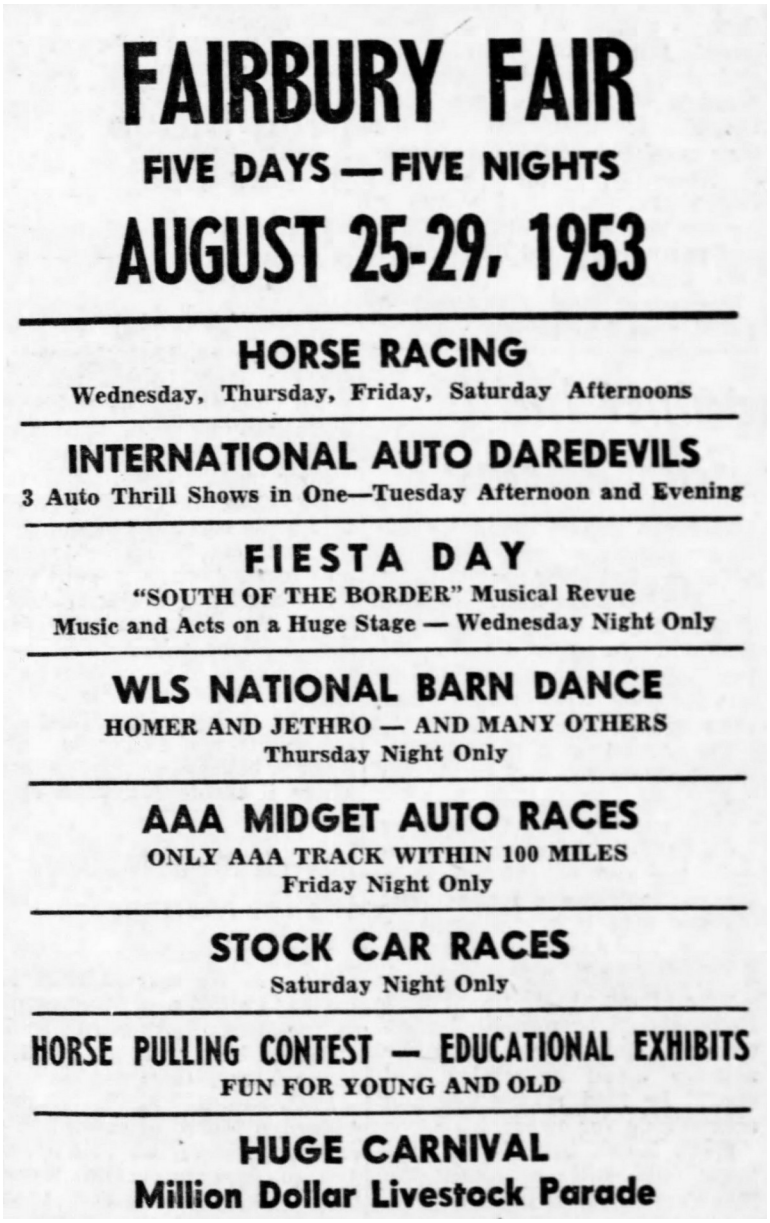
The Pantagraph also published an ad for the auto racing and carnival at the Fairbury Fair.

1953

The August 8, 1953, Pantagraph reported the Fairbury Fair Board was trying reserve seating in the grandstand for the first time in the fair's 77 year history.

> **Fair Board Reserves Seats For First Time**
>
> FAIRBURY – (PNS) – One thousand reserved grandstand and box seats are now available for the evening attractions of the Fairbury Fair being held Aug. 25 through Aug. 29. This is the first time in the 77 year history of the fair reserved grandstand tickets are being offered.
>
> The reserved section will be in the middle of the grandstand. These tickets are now being sold at Slagel's Insurance Agency until Aug. 17 when they may be secured at the secretary's office at the fairgrounds. Mail orders for tickets may be addressed to Box 146, Fairbury, with remittance enclosed.
>
> There will be approximately 700 general admission seats that will be sold at the box office before each program. These seats will be located on the east and west sides of the grandstand.

The gate season tickets are also available now at the Stephan's Drug Store, Wharton's Drug Store, Walton's Store, Honegger House, the E & E Cafe, Decker's Cafe, Oak Street Market, Bach's Lumber Yard and Slagel's Insurance Agency.


FAIRBURY FAIR
FIVE DAYS — FIVE NIGHTS
AUGUST 25-29, 1953
HORSE RACING
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday Afternoons
INTERNATIONAL AUTO DAREDEVILS
3 Auto Thrill Shows in One—Tuesday Afternoon and Evening
FIESTA DAY
"SOUTH OF THE BORDER" Musical Revue
Music and Acts on a Huge Stage — Wednesday Night Only
WLS NATIONAL BARN DANCE
HOMER AND JETHRO — AND MANY OTHERS
Thursday Night Only
AAA MIDGET AUTO RACES
ONLY AAA TRACK WITHIN 100 MILES
Friday Night Only
STOCK CAR RACES
Saturday Night Only
HORSE PULLING CONTEST — EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITS
FUN FOR YOUNG AND OLD
HUGE CARNIVAL
Million Dollar Livestock Parade

Pantagraph ad for 1953 Fairbury fair.

1954

On August 13, 1954, the Pantagraph announced that the 1954 Fairbury fair would have tractor pulls and tractor rodeos for the first time.

> **Fairbury Offers Tractor Contest**
>
> FAIRBURY – (PNS) – A new feature at this year's Fairbury Fair will be a tractor pulling contest and tractor rodeo, scheduled for Aug. 28. A total of $200 in prizes will be offered in the events, open to any Livingston or McLean County farmers entering rubber-tired tractors.
>
> The pulling contest will be divided into tractor weight classes. The rodeo events will be limited to boys or girls 21 years of age and under, and will include test of driving skill. Both events will be held in front of the grandstand.

The Pantagraph also published the program for the 1954 Fairbury Fair.

FAIRBURY FAIR

FIVE DAYS — FIVE NIGHTS

AUGUST 24 - 28, 1954

HORSE RACING

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday Afternoons

YOUTH DAY

Tuesday Afternoon — Many Contests and Races

WLS NATIONAL BARN DANCE

Tuesday Night — Jimmy James, Capt. Stubby, Dolph Hewitt, Grace Wilson, Beaver Valley Sweethearts

INTERNATIONAL REVUE

Wednesday and Thursday Nights
A NEW AND FINER MUSICAL REVUE

PEE WEE KING

HIS ORCHESTRA AND SHOW — THE AUTHOR OF "TENNESSEE WALTZ"
Friday Night Only

HORSE AND TRACTOR CONTESTS

PULLING CONTESTS AND RODEO — Saturday Afternoon

STOCK CAR RACES

SATURDAY NIGHT ONLY

HUGE CARNIVAL

Woman on carnival ride at the 1954 Fairbury Fair. Pantagraph negative.

1955

The Pantagraph published a detailed description of the events planned for the 1955 Fairbury fair.

Fairbury Fair Will Offer Races, Shows August 23–27

FAIRBURY – (PNS) – Five days and nights of entertainment and contests, including a $4,000 racing program sponsored by the John Joda Post of the American Legion, are scheduled for the 79th annual Fairbury Fair to be held August 23 through 27.

The "Tournament of Thrills," which will include a series of stunts which have been in movies, on television, on the speedways, and with leading auto stunt shows, will be enacted Tuesday afternoon and evening to highlight the first day's performance.

Each afternoon and evening the Fairbury Municipal Band will give a concert on the platform in front of the grandstand.

Wednesday's entertainment will feature a Society Horse Show in the evening and will also be the first of three days of horse racing. Six races are scheduled for each afternoon, Wednesday through Friday, with Dean Williams as superintendent of the speedway.

The "Duke of Paducah" stage show from Nashville, Tenn., featuring 11 of the Grand Ole Opry stars, will have the stage Thursday evening. Friday's audience will see a stock parade and an implement parade, followed by stock car racing at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday's festivities include a horse pulling contest, tractor pulling contest and a tractor rodeo. In the evening the five day program will come to a close with more stock car races, featuring a 50 lap contest.

All entries close at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, August 16, and all exhibits must be in place by 6 p.m., August 22. The secretary's office will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day from August 15 until the close of the fair. The gates will open at 7 a.m. each day of the fair.

Recently elected officers of the Fairbury fair are John P. Wade, president; James Peters, vice president; Elmer G. Hallock, treasurer; and Robert Maurer, secretary.

The Board of Directors is composed of: Carl Rapp, Moyne Humphrey, Joe U. Slagel, Ernest Mies, Clarence Simpson, Richard Koehl, William Dawson, Arthur Walter, William Frisby, Dean Williams, James Peters and John P. Wade. Superintendents for each department as named by the fair board are as follows: beef cattle class, Phil Thompson and John Goold; dairy cattle, Everett V. Crews, A. L. Bess, and John Harms; Jersey Show, Richard McCabe; sheep, Ross Hildreth and William D. Spence; swine, Harvey Ahring, George Myers and Oran Leffingwell; junior livestock, Herman Kilgus; poultry, James Mowry and Herman Harms; agriculture products, Wayne Newnam; textile and art, Miss Irene Denarske, Mrs. Sam Cox, Mrs. Alf Callaby and Mrs. Hartzell Cox; culinary department, Mrs. W. C. Payne, Mrs. Ross Hildreth, Mrs. Fred Elliott and Mrs. Tom Milne.

Sterling Craig will be superintendent of the horse and mule pulling contest. Floriculture will again be in charge of the Garden department of the Fairbury Woman's club.

Girl on a carnival ride at the 1955 Fairbury Fair. Pantagraph negative.

1956

The Pantagraph reported that new bleachers were being built for the 1956 Fairbury fair.

Legion Renovating For Aug. 21 Fair

80th Fairbury Show Will Run For Five Days

FAIRBURY – (PNS) – Fairbury's fairgrounds are undergoing a cleanup and fix up for the annual fair, the town's 80th, sponsored by John Joda Post No. 54, American Legion. The fair opens Aug. 21 and runs through the 25th.

New bleachers with a seating capacity of 1,400, is a major improvement this year, John Wade, fair president pointed out. The seats, 10 rows high and 200 feet long will replace all the bleachers at the south side of the midget track. The seats are of best quality wood and will be constructed by the Leavitt Bleacher Company of Urbana at a cost of $3,450, Mr. Wade said.

Started In 1876

Other improvements will be the painting of the hog barn at the east end of the grounds and installation of fluorescent lights around the main gate buildings.

Fairbury's fair opened in 1876 for a one day stand on Sept. 12, under the leadership of John Virgin, president. The sponsors known as the Indian Grove Fair association continued for 54 years until hit by financial troubles. There was no fair from 1930 to 1935. **[The Pantagraph reporter was incorrect. There were no Fairbury Fairs in 1931, 1932, and 1933.]**

So John Joda post in 1936 took over the $40,000 indebtedness of the fair association and reopened the fair. The post has continued the show each year except for the war years of 1942 and 1943. Last of the $40,000 indebtedness was paid off in 1944.

Other officers are James Peters, vice president; Robert J. Maurer, secretary; Elmer Hallock, treasurer.

Superintendents Picked

Superintendents of the various departments will be, Phil Thompson and John Goold, beef cattle; John Harms and Everett Crews, dairy cattle; Ross Hildreth and William D. Spence, sheep; Harvey Ahring, George Myers and Oran Leffingwell, swine; Herman Kilgus, junior livestock; Wayne Newman, agriculture products; Miss Irene Denarske, Mrs. Sam Cox, Mrs. Alfred Callaby and Mrs. Hartzell Cox, textiles and art; Mrs. W. C. Payne, Mrs. Ross Hildreth, Mrs. Fred Elliott and Mrs. Tom Milne, dairy, apiary and culinary.

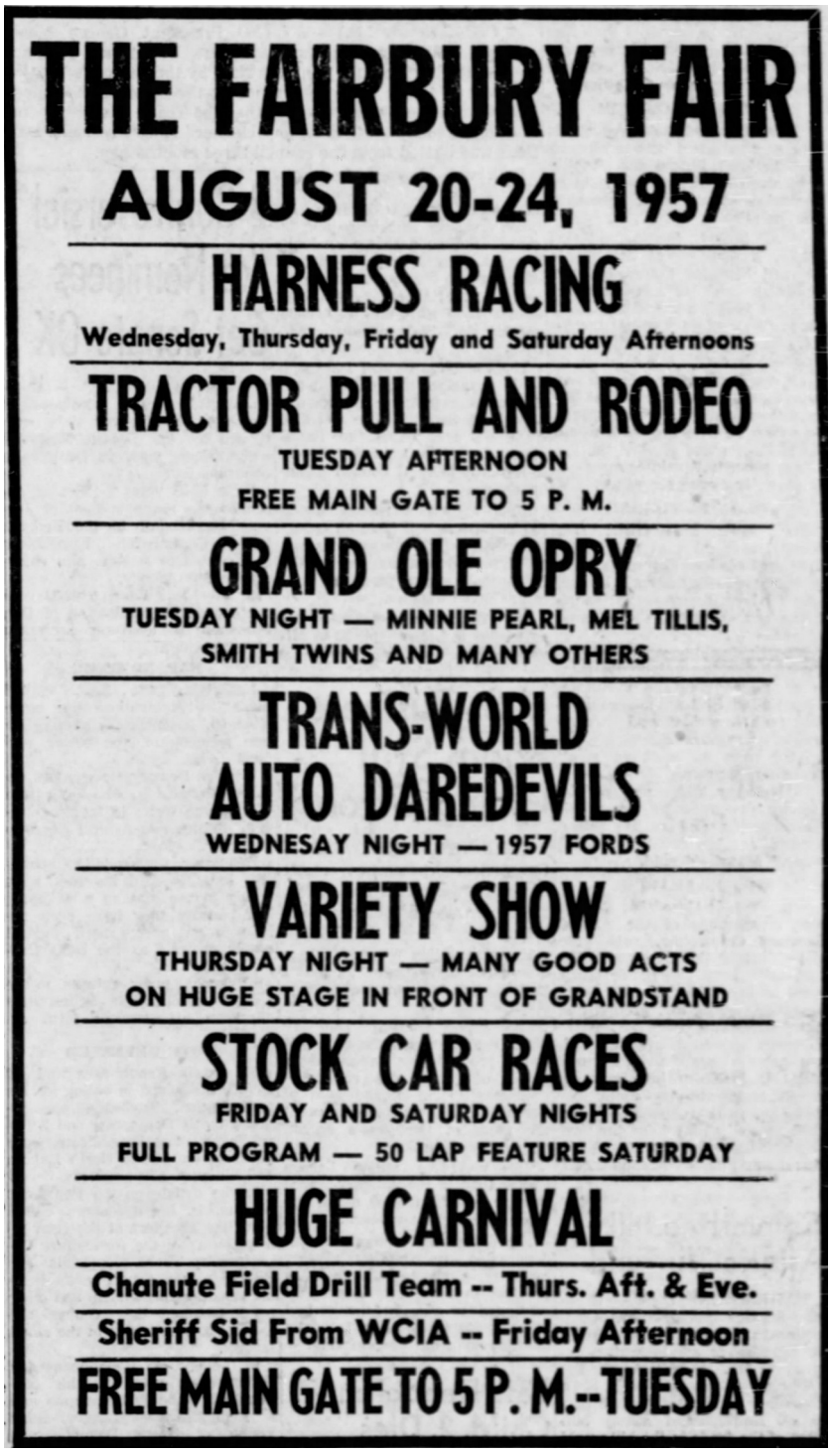
The floriculture department is under the direction of the garden department of the Woman's club with Miss Marjorie Fulton, Mrs. John Mapel and Mrs. Frances Lindsay as superintendents.

Raymond Householder will be in charge of the tractor contest.

Three children on a carnival ride at the 1956 Fairbury Fair. This cracked Pantagraph negative was repaired and colorized by Fotor.com.

1957

The Pantagraph published the program for the 1957 Fairbury Fair.



THE FAIRBURY FAIR

AUGUST 20-24, 1957

HARNESS RACING

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday Afternoons

TRACTOR PULL AND RODEO

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

FREE MAIN GATE TO 5 P. M.

GRAND OLE OPRY

TUESDAY NIGHT — MINNIE PEARL, MEL TILLIS, SMITH TWINS AND MANY OTHERS

TRANS-WORLD AUTO DAREDEVILS

WEDNESAY NIGHT — 1957 FORDS

VARIETY SHOW

THURSDAY NIGHT — MANY GOOD ACTS ON HUGE STAGE IN FRONT OF GRANDSTAND

STOCK CAR RACES

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS

FULL PROGRAM — 50 LAP FEATURE SATURDAY

HUGE CARNIVAL

Chanute Field Drill Team -- Thurs. Aft. & Eve.

Sheriff Sid From WCIA -- Friday Afternoon

FREE MAIN GATE TO 5 P. M.--TUESDAY

1958

The Pantagraph reported that new hog barns were being built for the 1958 Fairbury fair.

> **Build New Hog Barns At Fairbury Grounds**
>
> FAIRBURY – (PNS) – Two new hog barns are being constructed at Fairbury fairgrounds, John Wade, Fairbury Fair board president, has announced. They are of pole type construction and will have gabled roofs but no sides. Each is 40 by 80 feet.
>
> These plus the present hog barn will be able to accommodate about 450 hogs.
>
> The new buildings are so situated that a show ring can be made in a central location between the three buildings. Construction is expected to be completed next week.

The Pantagraph also reported on the plans for the 1958 Fairbury Fair.

> **Fairbury Fair's List of Prizes Totals $35,700**
>
> FAIRBURY – (PNS) – A total of $35,700 in prizes will be awarded at the 82nd Annual Fairbury Fair Aug. 19 through Aug. 23.
>
> There will be no admission charge before 5 p.m. on opening day, though the judging of livestock begins at 8 a.m.
>
> At 1 p.m. each day there will be a concert by the Fairbury Municipal band under the direction of Joe Reis.
>
> A tractor pull and rodeo will be held on Tuesday afternoon. William Frisby and Ernest Meis will be in charge.
>
> Members of the John Joda Post, the American Legion, sponsors of the event, are already at work on the grounds.
>
> The departments, amount of prizes and the persons in charge are as follows:
>
> Dairy cattle, $7,040, John Harms, Everett Crews, Kenneth Broquard; beef cattle, $8,303, John Goold, Warren Ulfers; sheep, $4,263, Ross Hildreth, Martin Spence; swine, $9,186, Harvey Ahring, George Myers, Oran Leffingwell; junior livestock, $4,600, William Freed; poultry, $324, James Mowery, Herman Harms; agriculture, $132.50, Wayne Newman; textiles and arts, $247.70, Irene Denarske, Mrs. Grace Cox, Mrs. Margaret Cox, Mrs. Betty Callaby; culinary, $247.70, Mrs. Vera Payne, Mrs. Chloe Hildreth, Mrs. Fred Elliott, Mrs. Edna Milne; junior department (other than livestock), $193.50; tractor, $878.80; rodeo, $122.50; floriculture, $200.25, Woman's Club.
>
> Dean Williams is superintendent of the speed program. A full program of harness racing is scheduled for Wednesday through Saturday. James Broadwell is race secretary.
>
> John P. Wade is president of the fair.

The Fairbury Fair
August 19-23, 1958
HARNESS RACING
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday Afternoons
TRACTOR PULL AND RODEO
Tuesday Afternoon
Free Main Gate to 5 P. M.
BARBERSHOP SING
Tuesday Night, 8:00 P. M.
Featuring the Schmitt Bros., the Kord Kutters, the
Big Four and 40 Voice Chorus
Trans-World Auto Daredevils
Wednesday Night — 1958 Fords
VARIETY SHOW
Thursday Night — Many Good Acts
On Huge Stage in Front of Grandstand
STOCK CAR RACES
Friday and Saturday Nights
Full Program — 50 Lap Feature Saturday
HUGE CARNIVAL

1959

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1959 Fairbury Fair.

1960

The Pantagraph published the program for the 1960 Fairbury fair.

FAIRBURY FAIR

AUGUST 23-27

Harness Racing

WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY AFTERNOONS

Tractor Pull and Tractor Rodeo

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

FREE MAIN GATE TO 5 P.M.

Trans-World Auto Daredevils

1960 FORDS—PLUS FAIRBURY "SWEET ADELINE" CHORUS

TUESDAY NIGHT

Midget Auto Races

110 OFFYS—INDIANAPOLIS "500" DRIVERS

WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Duke of Paducah Show

WITH JIMMY DICKENS, CARTER FAMILY

SMILEY & KITTY WILSON and MANY OTHERS

THURSDAY NIGHT

Stock Car Races

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS

50 LAP FEATURE—SATURDAY

Go-Kart Races

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

CARNIVAL on the MIDWAY

Two girls eating popcorn at the 1960 Fairbury Fair. Pantagraph negative.

CHAPTER 12

1961 to 1970

1961

The Pantagraph published the 1961 Fairbury fair schedule.

SPOTLIGHT on FAMILY FUN

AUG. 22nd thru 26th

FAIRBURY FAIR

HARNESS RACING

WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY AFTERNOONS — $5,500 Purse!

Post Time 1:30

TUESDAY

Afternoon: PONY HARNESS RACES 1:30 on 1/4 Mile Track

Night: TRANS-WORLD AUTO DAREDEVILS!

BAND CONCERT — 1:00 EVERY DAY!

WEDNESDAY

Afternoon: HARNESS RACING

Night: MIDGET AUTO RACES 110 OFFYS—50 LAP FEATURE

JUDGED EXHIBITS ON DISPLAY

THURSDAY

Afternoon: HARNESS RACING — LIVESTOCK — Modern Farm Equipment Displayed — SEE TOP ACTS — TRAINED ANIMALS

Night: GALA VARIETY SHOW ON STAGE IN FRONT OF GRANDSTAND —

FRIDAY

Afternoon: HARNESS RACING — Visit Floriculture Hall — Flowers, Fine Arts Displayed

Night: STOCK CAR RACES! 25 LAP FEATURE! IMPLEMENT PARADE —

SATURDAY

Afternoon: TRACTOR PULLING CONTEST AND TRACTOR RODEO — $945.00 PRIZE MONEY!

Night: FAIRBURY FAIR FEATURE 50-LAP STOCK CAR RACE! Top Cars — Top Drivers

MAKE THE FAIR FAMILY DAY!

GET YOUR FAIRBURY FAIR BOX SEATS AND GRANDSTAND SEATS EARLY!

WRITE FAIRBURY FAIR — FAIRBURY, ILL. or PHONE — 602M

CARNIVAL ON THE MIDWAY

1962

The Pantagraph published a schedule for the 1962 Fairbury fair.

1963

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1963 Fairbury fair.

SPOTLIGHT on FAMILY FUN

AUG. 20th thru 24th

FAIRBURY FAIR

HARNESS RACING

WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY AFTERNOONS—
$5,500 PURSE!
Post Time 1:30

TUESDAY

Afternoon: HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC TALENT SHOW

Night: TRANS-WORLD AUTO DAREDEVILS!
1963 FORDS - FALCONS

WEDNESDAY

Afternoon: HARNESS RACING

Night: MIDGET AUTO RACES
110 OFFYS—50 Lap Feature
JUDGED EXHIBITS ON DISPLAY

THURSDAY

Afternoon: HARNESS RACING—
LIVESTOCK — Modern Farm Equipment Displayed—

Night: GALA MUSIC SHOW FEATURING BRIAN HYLAND, LOU CHRISTIE PLUS TOP VAUDEVILLE ACTS WITH LOU PROHUT

FRIDAY

Afternoon: HARNESS RACING—
Visit Floriculture Hall—
Flowers, Fine Arts Displayed

Night: STOCK CAR RACES!
NO TIME TRIALS—7:45 P.M.

SATURDAY

Afternoon: TRACTOR PULLING CONTEST AND TRACTOR RODEO—
$900.00 PRIZE MONEY

Night: STOCK CAR RACES!
NO TIME TRIALS
1ST RACE—7:45 P.M.
Top Cars—Top Drivers

MAKE THE FAIR FAMILY DAY!

GET YOUR FAIRBURY FAIR BOX SEATS AND GRANDSTAND SEATS EARLY!

WRITE FAIRBURY FAIR — FAIRBURY, ILL.
or PHONE — 602M

CARNIVAL ON THE MIDWAY

1964

The Pantagraph reported a new Floral Hall was being built for the 1964 Fairbury fair.

> **Work Begins On Fairbury Fair Building**
>
> FAIRBURY (PNS) – The foundation has been started for a new Floral Hall at the Fairbury Fair grounds to replace one which was torn down during the winter by Robert Schmidt.
>
> The new Floral Hall will be a 32 by 100 foot steel building, turquoise and white. It will have 14-foot sidewalls and will be completely insulated. There will be four entrances, two on the north and one each on the west and east.
>
> The building is to be ready for the fair in August.
>
> Art Walters, Jim Peters and Ernest Mies are in charge of the project.

The Pantagraph published a schedule of 1964 Fairbury fair events.

1965

The 1965 Fairbury fair featured a teen talent show per the Pantagraph.

> **Talent Show To Open Fair At Fairbury**
>
> FAIRBURY – A talent show for entertainment acts by people under the age of 18 is to serve as the opening event of the Fairbury Fair Aug. 24.
>
> The talent show will be divided into two divisions: a junior division for acts under the senior high school age, and a senior division for performers of high school age.
>
> Wayne Bradtke is in charge of entrants and entries.

1966

The Pantagraph published this description of events planned for the 1966 Fairbury fair.

> **FOR 5 DAY RUN**
>
> **Fairbury Fair Opens Tuesday**
>
> FAIRBURY (PNS) – The 90th Fairbury Fair will open Tuesday for a five-day run.
>
> Entries in the livestock show closed Tuesday and cattle and poultry entries are above those of last year, with sheep and swine entries about the same. Judging will begin at 8 a.m. Tuesday.
>
> The Hollywood Stunt Stars is a new program booked for this year, offering a new and unusual form of entertainment for Tuesday night at the grandstand. They will produce, before a frontier set, rooftop fights and falls, runaway horses, blazing wagons and crashes.
>
> Another unusual act to be seen will be Maritella, who does an aerial act from a 30 foot pole atop a moving car. She may be seen Wednesday afternoon and evening and on Thursday and Friday.
>
> On Thursday night the “Ink Spots” will perform at the grandstand. A Canadian combo called “The Chief-Tones” will also appear. There will be a chimpanzee animal act, comedians, and music.
>
> Wednesday night the midget races will be held with time trials beginning at 7:30. There will be two 50-lap races.
>
> On Friday and Saturday nights will be the Stocks and Rails auto races and Saturday afternoon will feature the tractor rodeo.
>
> On the first day of the fair at 1:30 p.m., a high school musical variety show will be held at the grandstand. There will be 16 acts competing in the teen show under the supervision of

Wayne Bradtke, band instructor at Fairbury-Cropsey High School. Serving as master of ceremonies will be Ray Williams, son of Mr. and Mrs. Dean Williams.

The Fairbury-Cropsey Blue Notes will open the show with a half-hour concert of music and at 2 p.m. the talent show will begin.

1967

The Pantagraph announced that automation was being used for the 1967 Fairbury fair.

Progress

FAIRBURY (PNS) – About 30 volunteers for the annual Fairbury Fair tractor pulling contest Aug. 26 have been automated out of their jobs, according to Supt. Ernie Mies. A newly-developed hydraulic machine on a sled will replace the men who formerly hopped on behind the competing tractor. The machine, being used in Illinois for the first time at the State Fair, is said to be fairer and more accurate in picking winners.

The Pantagraph also announced the events at the 1967 Fairbury fair.

Meister Brau Horses Fairbury Fair Feature

FAIRBURY (PNS)—The 91st Fairbury Fair will open at 8 a.m. Tuesday and run through Saturday.

An added attraction at the Fair this year will be the colorful Meister Brau, six-stallion hitch, the only draft horses of the German Westphalian breed in America, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Fairground facilities have been improved with the addition of a new roof on the grandstand and all restrooms on the grounds have been rebuilt. Additional bleachers have been added permitting more seating for the grandstand shows.

Tuesday's entertainment begins at 1:30 p.m. with the High School Music Variety Show, followed by the All Girl Auto Thrill Show at 8 p.m. that evening.

At 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, three days of harness racing will begin. This is always a highlight of the Fair and this year all races will be two heats, according to Dean Williams, superintendent of speed.

Wednesday night, the ever-popular Midget Autos move in for an evening of racing with many Indianapolis drivers manning the little, but mighty Offys.

On Thursday night there will be a livestock parade in front of the grandstand at the race track beginning at 7 o'clock. This will be followed by a variety show, which will feature the return of Wes Harrison, the Sound Effects Man, with a new routine.

Others on the program will include the Two Torreanis, a balancing duo; The Tahuna Polynesian Dancers from Samoa, Tahiti and Hawaii; the Stebbing Boxers and Magician Marshall Bordien as master of ceremonies.

Friday and Saturday evenings, beginning at 7:45, will be stock car racing. This is the annual windup of a season long racing program, and during these two nights, there will be no time trials.

1968

This fair featured Frank Sinatra Jr. as a main event per the Pantagraph ad.

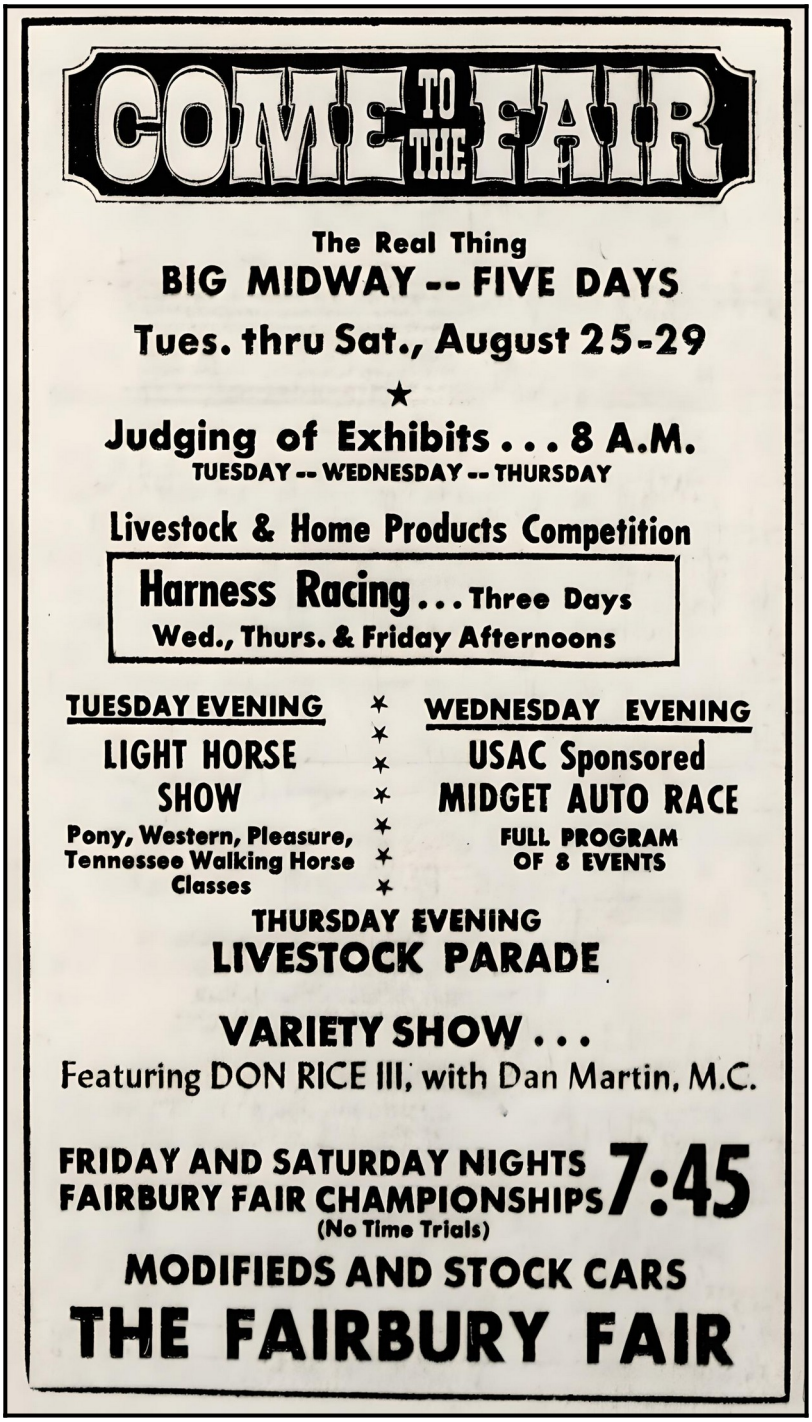
1969

The Pantagraph published the plans for the 1969 Fairbury fair.

> **Fairbury Fairgrounds Readied For Annual Event Aug. 19–23**
>
> FAIRBURY (PNS)—The entire grandstand and all of the seats have been re-painted during the year at the Fairbury Fairgrounds, in preparation for the Fairbury Fair, to be held Aug. 19-23, according to Duane Morris, president of the Fair Association.
>
> Also, during the year, the hog shed and cattle barns have been painted and a new roof has been placed on the water fountain. About $8,000 was spent to have the 4,800 volt line down the middle of the midway buried in an underground cable. Considerable funds were spent in the restrooms for toilet tops and drains. Roads were given an all-weather surface of oil and chips and a new concrete base will be put under the food stand by the track.
>
> **Reserved Seats**
>
> A new policy has been instituted whereby 500 reserved seats will go on sale for the Thursday night performance, providing space for persons who had last minute changes in plans and would attend if they had assurance that all space had not been reserved weeks in advance.
>
> This year there will be a free gate with no admission until 5 p.m. The fair will open on Tuesday, Aug. 19, and the Tuesday afternoon grandstand show will be the annual talent hunt, “Stars of Tomorrow” directed by Hap De Fries. Tuesday night will feature a light horse show. This year will be the sweepstakes championship nights on the track for the stock cars and super modifieds, winding up the traditional 10-week racing program on the Fairbury Legion Speedway. Saturday afternoon will feature a tractor pull under the auspices of the new Illinois Tractor Pulling Association for the first time. Winners will accumulate points toward the state championship to be decided annually at the State Fair.

1970

The Pantagraph published the ad below for the 1970 Fairbury fair.


COME TO THE FAIR
The Real Thing
BIG MIDWAY -- FIVE DAYS
Tues. thru Sat., August 25-29
★
Judging of Exhibits . . . 8 A.M.
TUESDAY -- WEDNESDAY -- THURSDAY
Livestock & Home Products Competition
Harness Racing . . . Three Days
Wed., Thurs. & Friday Afternoons
TUESDAY EVENING
LIGHT HORSE SHOW
Pony, Western, Pleasure, Tennessee Walking Horse Classes
WEDNESDAY EVENING
USAC Sponsored MIDGET AUTO RACE
FULL PROGRAM OF 8 EVENTS
THURSDAY EVENING
LIVESTOCK PARADE
VARIETY SHOW . . .
Featuring DON RICE III, with Dan Martin, M.C.
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS
FAIRBURY FAIR CHAMPIONSHIPS 7:45
(No Time Trials)
MODIFIEDS AND STOCK CARS
THE FAIRBURY FAIR

CHAPTER 13

1971 to 1980

1971

Per the 1971 Fairbury ad in the Pantagraph, Dolly Parton was a featured entertainer for that fair.

Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton from 1971 photo.

COME TO THE FAIR

The Real Thing

BIG MIDWAY -- FIVE DAYS
Tues. thru Sat., Aug. 24-28

★

Judging of Exhibits...8 a.m.

TUESDAY -- WEDNESDAY -- THURSDAY

Livestock & Home Products Competition

Harness Racing . . . Three Days

Wed., Thurs., & Friday Afternoons

TUESDAY EVENING

Nationwide
Demo. Derby
Spectacular Thrills

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WEDNESDAY EVENING

UARA Sponsored
Midget Auto Race

FULL PROGRAM
OF 8 EVENTS

THURSDAY EVENING

LIVESTOCK PARADE

★

PORTER WAGONER SHOW

with Dolly Parton, Speck Rhodes and The Wagonmasters

★

Fairbury Fair Championships 7:45

(NO TIMETRIALS)

6 Cyls. and 8 Cyls.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS
SUNDAY NIGHT AT FARMER CITY

THE FAIRBURY FAIR

1972

Several improvements were planned for the 1972 Fairbury fair per the Pantagraph.

Fairbury fairgrounds improvements to be completed by fair time

FAIRBURY (PNS) — Improvements are almost completed at the Fairbury fairgrounds for the opening of the 96th annual Fairbury Fair, which opens Wednesday, Aug. 23 and runs through Sunday, Aug. 27.

The grandstand has been repainted in a bronze shade and all seats have been re-lettered and renumbered. The lower part of the grandstand has been reinforced and two new amplifiers have been added to the public address system. Electricity cables have been buried underground and a new ticket office has been erected at the Second Street entrance to the grounds. All the roads have been resurfaced inside the grounds and the women's restroom has been repainted.

Two other "new" looks this year includes running the fair through Sunday for the first times in it's history. There will also be free admission to the grandstand for all afternoon shows, which includes the Gene Holter Wild Animal Show Wednesday, the tractor pull on Thursday and three days of harness racing, beginning on Friday, Aug. 25.

For the first time at the fair, there will be two classes in ceramics in the fine arts department. Mrs. Judy Dillon of Paxton, art teacher at Forrest-Strawn-Wing, will be the judge.

The Pantagraph also published the schedule for this fair.

1973

The Pantagraph ad for this fair is shown below.

1974

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1974 Fairbury fair.

1975

Grandpa Jones was the featured performer for this fair per the Pantagraph.

Grandpa Jones headliner for 99th Fairbury Fair

FAIRBURY (PNS)—The 99th Fairbury Fair will begin Wednesday, Aug. 20, and continue through Sunday, Aug. 24, sponsored by the American Legion. There are premiums being offered in the amount of $60,000, the most ever offered by the fair.

The free attraction at the grandstand on opening day will be a performance by the Harmonical Kids and Dad, the second generation of a popular World War II entertainment unit. This will replace the tractor pull which will be held Wednesday night.

Grandpa Jones, performer on the "Hee Haw" television show, will perform Thursday night at the fair along with Crystal Gayle and Del Reeves, country music stars from the Grand Ole Opry. The performances will be in front of the grandstand at 7 and 8 p.m.

There will be three afternoons of harness racing on the half-mile track Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with a free grandstand. There will be a total of $7,100 in purses offered.

The other free grandstand show will be a talent show on Thursday afternoon.

Friday and Saturday nights will be the traditional championship stock car races which will climax the 10-week Legion Speedway racing program.

Sunday night's grandstand show will feature a musical revue starring the "Edwardians" and the Lipko Comedy Chimps.

Gates will open at 7 a.m. on fair days with entries to be made by 5 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 13. Entries must be at the grounds on Tuesday, Aug. 19, with the exception of floriculture entries which must be in place by 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 20.

There will be a flea market on the grounds directed by Bill Frisby. Friday, Aug. 22, will be Kids' Day with special prizes for all. Rides will be available provided by the Olympic Shows.

Premiums being offered in some of the departments include stock car racing, $5,000 to $7,500; beef, $11,278; dairy, $7,922; sheep, $6,679; swine, $11,346; junior livestock, $627; poultry and rabbits, $618; floriculture, $516; textiles, $450.75; fine arts, $163.75; culinary, $306.75; dairy, apiary and culinary, $306.75; junior, other than livestock, $381.50; tractor contest, $2,025; dogs, $170.

The Pantagraph also published the schedule for this fair.

THE FAIRBURY FAIR

Fairbury, Ill. 61739

Sponsored by The American Legion

—WEDNESDAY—
Family Day
8:00 A.M.—Judging of Exhibits
1:30 P.M.—Harmonicat Kids & Dad
6:30 P.M.—Tractor Pull

—THURSDAY—
8:00 A.M.—Judging of Exhibits
1:30 P.M.—Talent Show
7 & 9 P.M.—Del Reeves & Grandpa Jones

—FRIDAY—
Kids Day
8:00 A.M.—Judging of Exhibits
1:00 P.M.—Music
1:30 P.M.—Harness Racing
4:30 P.M.—Drawing for Free Prizes
7:45 P.M.—Stock Car Racing (No Time Trials)

AUG. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24

1975

—SATURDAY—
1:00 P.M.—Music
1:30 P.M.—Harness Racing
7:45 P.M.—Stock Car Racing (No Time Trials)

—SUNDAY—
9:00 A.M.—Flea Market
1:00 P.M.—Dog Show
1:00 P.M.—Music
1:30 P.M.—Harness Racing
7:30 P.M.—The Edwardians, Musical Revue

Olympic Shows on Midway

1976

The Pantagraph reported the Fairbury Fair Association bought a lot near the fairgrounds.

Fair association buys lot at Fairbury

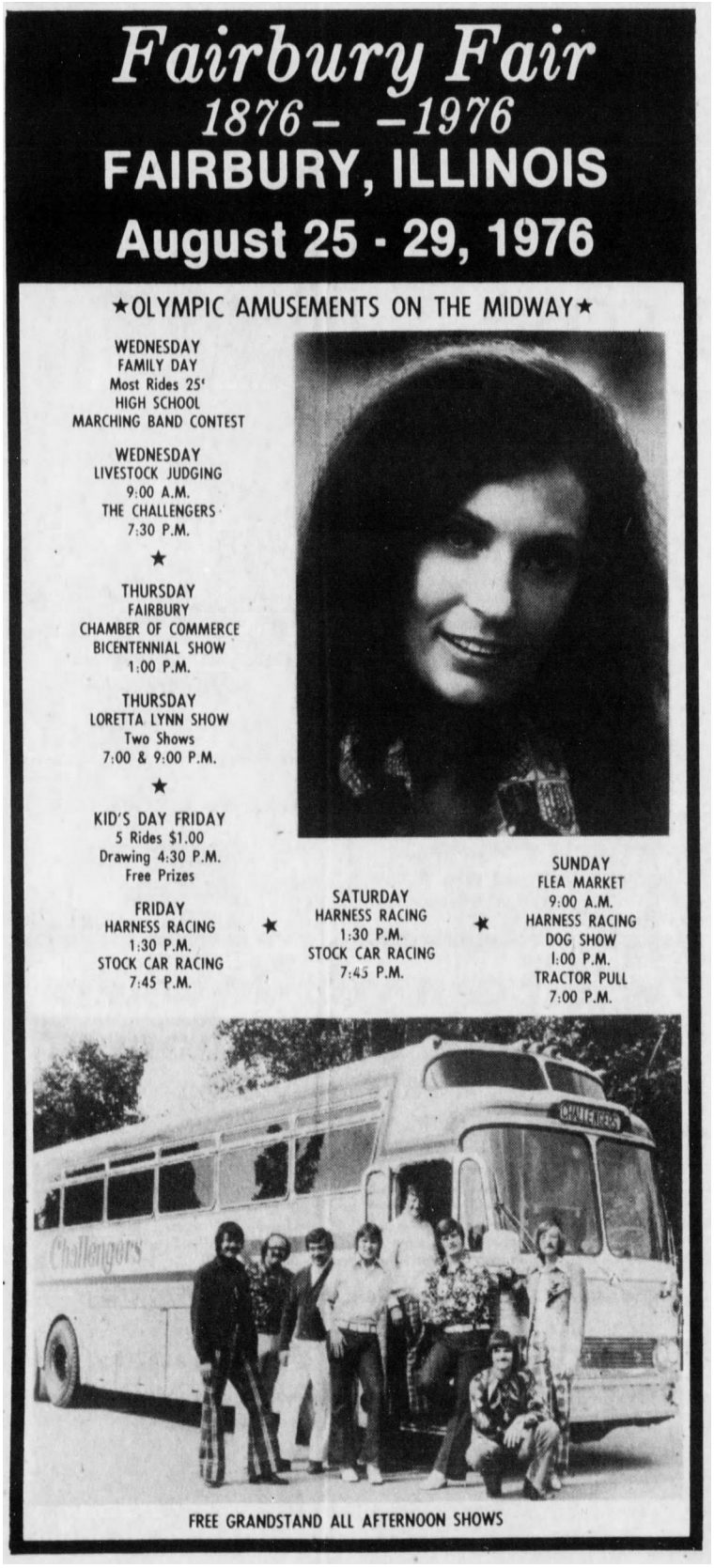
FAIRBURY (PNS)—The Fairbury Fair Association bought a vacant lot next to the fairgrounds for $4,100 at an auction Saturday.

The lot was part of the estate of the Jess Arthurs.

Mr. Arthur's residence, adjacent to the lot, was sold for $20,000 to Mr. and Mrs. Ken Jenkins at the auction.

The lot may be used for additional parking at the fairgrounds.

The schedule for this fair was published by the Pantagraph. Loretta Lynn was the featured performer.



The August 19, 1976, edition of the Blade published a story about the history of the Fairbury Fair. Bill Fugate researched the old Blade newspapers and wrote this story.

Highlights of Fairbury fair's 1st century

(Editor's Note - • Bill Fugate spent several days recently researching the tiles of The Fairbury Blade and Its predecessors. The Independent Blade, the Independent. and The Journal, to capture the highlights of the Fairbury Fair's First Century for a speech to Rotary club. The following is adapted from that speech.

In 1840, there were 759 people in all of Livingston county, which has the fourth largest area in the state; in 20 years it had grown to 11,637, and by 1870 to 31,471.

In 1862, Fairbury, which had been laid out in 1857, had its first coal mine, and two years later, in 1864 it was incorporated. In 1866 it had the first of what for a painful few years (common to the state), was a profusion of newspapers.

The first here was the Journal, started in 1866, and by 1876 several had come and gone, but The Blade was firmly entrenched and ready to look after the fair, year for year, when the ambitious citizens of the area decided in 1876, to launch the Fairbury Union Agricultural Exposition. Remember that in that year, there were no telephones, no electric lights (and no night entertainment at the fair); no central heating plants, no paved roads, and the only Flying Machine heard of was that of the fictional Darius Greene.

According to The Blade "The Fairbury people are tired of Pontiac having their own fair, so The Fairbury Union Agricultural Board was incorporated under legislative act in 1876."

On Jan. 19, the first officers were John Virgin (a horse importer) president; John S. Steers, vice-president; C.C. Bartlett, treasurer; and Smith Olney, secretary. Other directors were Jacob B. Bally, Stephen Herr, Henry Kingman, John F. Myers, Henry Skinner, George Myers, Robert Elmore, J.H. Earnhart, Owen Finnegan, D.L. Murdock, R.E. Norman, D.R. Potter and Benjamin Curnpston.

Emery Gregg was the marshal, assisted by W.L. Bailey; and R.C. Straight was the stall agent.

James Cook was named general superintendent of the Floral Hall.

Department superintendents were E.W. Mahoney, cattle; John Morris, horses; Samuel Morrison, sheep; William Younger, swine; H.B. Watson, poultry; T.T. Babcock, speed; D.S. Crum, farming implements; O.S. Westervelt, horticulture; Robert Montgomery, sewing machines; George Warrick, farm products; Mrs. T.A. Jones, canned and preserved fruits; Mrs. C.B. Alford, paintings and drawings; Mrs. Smith Olney, floral; Mrs. H. Remington, household fabrics; Mrs. R.G. Crouch, kitchen and dairy; Miss M.A. McDowell, textile fabrics; William Casey, unremunerated articles; and W. N. Combs, work in leather.

That first fair book, of which we have a copy courtesy of Dick Anderson of Fairbury. goes on to say that "Whereas the farmers and mechanics of this portion of the state deem this point the best opening for a great Union Fair, and having a desire to elevate their profession, and excite in each other a spirit of emulation and rivalry, we, therefore do hereby form ourselves into an Agricultural and Mechanical Association with its central point in Fairbury."

They raised $6,000 by selling 240 shares at $25 each, and the same 21 acres of land on which the fair stands today were purchased at an aggregate cost of $2,800.

By 1878, the grounds were well improved and enclosed with an eight-foot board fence, and had large and commodious buildings.

That first year, the fair offered "Class F, Trotting, T.T. Babcock, superintendent. Fastest trotter in harness, mile heats, best three in five, three or more to enter, two to start." First premium was $125; second, $50, and third was $25. Entry fee was 10% of the purse, or $20. They also had a race for four year olds, half mile, two out of three heats; and the same for three year old trotters, with both races paying $25 for first money, $15 and $10 for second and third, and entry fees of $5 for the four year olds, and none for three year olds.

But perhaps the most unique aspect of that first fair was its emphasis not only on better breeding stock in the livestock world, but also on the mechanical side.

This was the age of the blacksmith and the tinkerer and the inventor.

That first Fairbury fair offered classes for the best sod plow, the best sub-soil plow, old ground plow, gang plow, trench plow, corn plow, single-shovel plow, double-shovel plow, two horse cultivator, walking; two-horse cultivator, riding; corn planter, harrow, hay pitchfork, field roller, broadcast sower, horse rake;

Best corn shelter, both horse and hand-power; fanning mill, hay and straw stacker, feed grinder, self-raking reaper, single mower, bee hive, churn, clothes wringer, clothes dryer (and they didn't mean gas or electric), cheese press, coal cooking stove, coal parlor stove, washing machine, combined reaper and mower;

Threshing machine, grain binder, portable hay press, corn gatherer, under-draining machine, underground drain tile; farm gate, road scraper, hedge trimmer, post auger, lifting pump, forcing pump, wind pump, corn basket, fruit basket, two-horse carriage, two horse wagon, one-horse top buggy, one-horse open buggy; cider mill and fence for farm purposes.

That last class is important, for you must remember that this was just at the time that the great barb-wire "explosion" and patent race was taking place just 100 miles or so north of us at DeKalb, between 1874 and 1878.

The item judged best in each of the above categories was awarded "The Diploma of The Board" which in those times was useful in advertising if the product was to be marketed.

In fact, we have an example of that today in the brand name of a popular beer, Pabst Blue Ribbon, which drew its name from a premium award.

As for sewing machines, the premium book said "A Diploma from a committee, to be selected by the agents exhibiting machines, will be awarded to the best machine."

And to show they came to stay, that first board of directors offered Class Q, Shade Trees. "Best shade trees, to be paid for at fair for 1877. For 6 best planted and growing, set in spring or autumn, on fair ground, as directed by superintendent of our fair ground. First premium $25, 2nd, $15 and 3rd, $10."

The inauguration of The Fairbury Fair caused sparks in Pontiac, and the newspaper there referred to the planned Fairbury event as a "pumpkin fair." The next year, when Pontiac was to hold their 20th fair, while Fairbury was preparing for only its second, the Pontiac newspaper alluded to the fact that we were so audacious as to call ours a county fair.

The Blade retorted that "Our fair is open to the world.

"Compared to our World's Fair, it (Pontiac) will be absolutely nowhere."

Meanwhile, in preparation for the fair, Fairbury launched a cleanup effort. Privies were painted, manure was hauled from barn lots, trash was removed, and even the town jail was cleaned.

As fair week dawned, The Blade reported that "Livestock is being driven into town for exhibition; race horses are coming, with water buckets and blankets tied under their sulkies. Drays are waiting at the railroad station to bring the carnival, and the side shows "will include a snake charmer, a snake eater, cane men, balloon men, whip men and a fortune teller.

A "dance show, with the wholly exposed female form in dance posture, multiplied by mirrors, was run out of town by the church ladies."

The steam operated merry-go-round had a hand-cranked organ for music, and when the boiler suffered a breakdown, a local blacksmith got it back in operation in a few hours.

Most fairgoers from out of town came by wagon, there were only about a half-dozen carriages in evidence, and most brought their dinners with them. They unhitched, tied their horses to the wagon, and used the wagon box for a feed trough when it came the horses' turn.

It rained the first night, and turned the fairgrounds to mud. Notwithstanding, the first fair was a success, and for the second one, in 1877, an Old Settler's Day was planned, to honor those who had lived here at least 15 years.

That first fair attracted 1,400 entries, and all premiums were paid in cash, with no pro-rate deduction, which was the case in many fairs where they lacked enough to pay off.

And the floral hall exhibition included a patented wood fly trap!

For 1877, the Fair board advertised for several weeks in The Blade that "Not withstanding the depressing influence of the times, consequent upon the partial failure of crops in this vicinity for three years previous, and almost entire failure last year, the inclemency of the weather during the time of holding our first fair last fall, it met with a great success, both financially and otherwise, equaled by few and surpassed by none of the county fairs in the state."

In those days, they took fair entries when they saw them, and so many showed up the second year that the entry deadline was extended to the second day in order to get them all recorded. They totaled 1,727, an increase of 300 over the first year, and among them were 370 horses, 105 cattle, 27 sheep and 120 hogs, as well as 118 poultry, 130 dairy products, 125 textile and 63 fabrics. There were 60 farm implements, 3 sewing machines, two shade trees, 252 canned goods, 117 fruits and vegetables and 27 paintings, plus 100 unremunerated.

On several of the days, they had 7,000 people, and on one of them, a certain Brick Pomeroy was to speak on two topics "How to keep out of the poor house," and "What I know about farming."

But Pomeroy didn't show up, having missed his train at Pontiac. While great disappointment war "being expressed by the Multitudes", the officers learned of the problem by telegraph. They chartered a train at Pontiac, brought Pomeroy to Fairbury, arriving here by 5 p.m., where he then delivered what The Blade called "a good speech."

Talk of the 1878 fair was the phonograph. It cost 10c to hear "this wonderful machine which talks, plays the cornet, sings and laughs."

Hans Schuler of Colfax gave Lincoln's Gettysburg address, and for the best drilled military company, the Fair paid $50 and a silk flag for first, and $15 and a bunting flag for second. Capt. Joe Scibird, mayor of Fairbury and editor of The Blade, presented his Zouave cadets, a youthful drill corps which used wooden guns.

That same year the fair offered $25 for the best baseball club, and the tournament was halted in the fourth inning of the finals when a dispute arose between Fairbury and Forrest over an umpire's decision and play was not resumed.

In 1879, fair entries had risen to 2,294, and John Virgin, the horse importer and fair president, was advertising that "no class of property, real or personal, depreciates so little as a horse."

By 1883, they were paying $4,000 in premiums (this year it's $66,000); and The Blade wrote "Look out for a gang of robbers who will follow the show here today. Keep your house well secured as a worse gang of toughs probably was never gathered together!" Walton's were exhibiting parlor and bedroom furniture; while Merit and Sons were showing boots and shoes.

In 1884 The Blade began the publication of a free daily newspaper during the fair, a tradition that continued for several years. featured Fairbury's own Carl Goudy, who for years was the world champion in this sport.

By 1901, the Fair was in its 25th year, and Frank James, the reformed desperado, was here as starter for the horse races. The next year, the hottest items on the grounds were two newly developed grain dumps. A year later, a baby was born on the fairgrounds to the wild animal trainer and his wife, and she was christened Essie Fairbury Sanders.

In 1916, Newt Fulton, fair Secretary and by then the editor of The Blade, launched the promotion of auto races, and secured the appearance of Eddie Rickenbacker, who was to gain later fame as an aviator and hero of two wars.

Then came the motorcycle races which featured Fairbury's own Carl Goudy, who for years was the world champion in this sport.

The quarter mile track was built in 1946, and in 1947, 5,300 paid admission to see the 50-lap feature on it.

At the 1923 fair, there was a scarcity of corn due to the backward season, DeBold Householder won the early potato class, Raymond Tavener had the champion big club swine litter, and Helen Garber, now Helen Bennett, had the first place girls divinity candy, while "Little" Carlos Thompson showed Barred Plymouth Rock chickens, winning firsts for hen, and pen, and second place for cockerel; he also won the 8th grade writing contest and the 8th grade wood working class.

During that fair week, Alexander's bakery sold 37,861 buns and 652 pies, and Mayor Joseph Gerber warned against spitting on the sidewalk.

By 1925, Pontiac had buried the hatchet, and lauded Fairbury and The Blade on publication of the Golden Jubilee Fair issue, calling it "a laudable effort."

That year the two-time world's champion horse shoe pitcher, Frank Johnson, set a new world's record here, making 80 out of a possible 100 ringers, and 31 of them were double ringers.

The 1926 fair offered the first of a long series of Society Horse shows, drawing nationally known names, and also launched the Better Babies Conference.

After the fair fell into financial difficulties during the depression of the 1930s, a reorganization failed, and the fair missed a year.

Then John Joda Post 54 of The American Legion, in 1936, took over the mortgage from the small group chartered as the Indian Grove Fair association, which had succeeded the Fairbury Union Agricultural association, paying them $6,300, after borrowing $4,000 from the bank. Three years later they got a new charter, as The Fairbury Fair, and in 1941 they paid back their bank loan in full.

In the ensuing 35 years, the fair has developed its 10-week summer auto racing program, upgraded the horse racing program, and sought new ways to attract spectators who in that time have become more sophisticated in their entertainment tastes, and more mobile in their recreation.

Today, we still have car races and horse races, plus tractor pulls, a shift to later week programming, Wednesday through Sunday, a marching band contest, Loretta Lynn, the Queen of Country Music, and a flea market, selling things that were popular when the Fair was only half as old, or even younger. And so we complete our first century, and set our eyes on the next 100 years.

The Blade published a photo of the 1976 Fair Board and this photo is shown below.

FAIRBURY FAIR Officers and Directors seated, left to right: Wayne Ziller, Jr.; Richard Atteberry; Bill Fugate, Sec.; Art Walter, Vice Pres.; Duane Morris, Pres.; Dean Williams; Ernest Mies; Carl Rapp. Standing: Elmer G. Hallock, Treas.; Clarence Simpson; Wm. Van Antwerp; Everett Meister; Everett Crews; Wm. Dawson.

1977

In July of 1977, the Pantagraph reported the president of the Fairbury Fair had resigned.

> **Fairbury Fair president resigns**
>
> Duane “Buck” Morris has resigned as president of the Fairbury Fair. Morris said the resignation was for “personal reasons,” but he will remain in an advisory capacity for the rest of the season.
>
> Morris said he had compiled a comprehensive notebook which would help his successor, Art Walter, who was vice president.

The Pantagraph also published the schedule for this fair.

1876 *Fairbury Fair* 1977

FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 24-28, 1977

★ OLYMPIC AMUSEMENTS ON THE MIDWAY ★

★ WEDNESDAY ★
FAMILY DAY
Most Rides 25¢

HIGH SCHOOL
MARCHING BAND CONTEST
1:00 P.M.

★ WEDNESDAY ★
LIVESTOCK JUDGING
9:00 A.M.
WORLD SERIES OF THRILLS
MOTORCYCLE RODEO
"OPEN CONTEST"
8:00 P.M.

FREE GRANDSTAND
ALL
AFTERNOON SHOWS

"YOU CAN ENTER!"

World Series of Thrills
Presents-
INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
MOTORCYCLE
CONTEST
RODEO
AREA RIDERS-CASH PRIZES-TROPHIES

★ THURSDAY ★
STEER SHOW
1:00 P.M.

★ THURSDAY ★
CONWAY TWITTY
2 Shows
7:00 P.M. & 9:00 P.M.

KID'S DAY FRIDAY
5 Rides $1.00
Drawing 4:30 P.M.
Free Prizes

CONWAY TWITTY

★ FRIDAY ★
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
NO TIME TRIALS

★ SATURDAY ★
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
NO TIME TRIALS

★ SUNDAY ★
FLEA MARKET
9:00 A.M.
HARNESS RACING
DOG SHOW
1:00 P.M.
TRACTOR PULL
6:30 P.M.

ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

1978

The Pantagraph published the schedule for this Fairbury fair.

1979

The Pantagraph ad for this fair is shown below.

1876 FAIRBURY FAIR 1979

August 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

JIM NEALS'S

★ *ILLINOIS VALLEY AMUSEMENTS on the Midway* ★

★ WEDNESDAY ★
August 22
FAMILY DAY
3 Rides $1.00
1:00 P.M.
HIGH SCHOOL
MARCHING BAND CONTEST
SONNY JAMES SHOW
2 Shows
7:00 P.M. & 9:00 P.M.
$

★ THURSDAY ★
August 23
THOROUGHBRED RACING
1:30 P.M.
BILLY "CRASH" CRADDOCK
2 Shows
7:00 P.M. & 9:00 P.M.

★ FRIDAY ★
August 24
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
No Time Trials

★ SATURDAY ★
August 25
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
No Time Trials

RESERVED SEATS FOR ALL NIGHT SHOWS
Except Sunday Night

SONNY JAMES

BILLY "CRASH" CRADDOCK

★ SUNDAY ★
August 26
FLEA MARKET
9:00 A.M.
HARNESS RACING
DOG SHOW
1:30 P.M.
TRACTOR PULL
6:00 P.M.

TRACTOR PULL

STOCK CAR RACING

KID'S DAY - FRIDAY
3 Rides $1.00
Drawing 4:30 P.M.
FREE PRIZES

FREE GRANDSTAND
ALL
AFTERNOON SHOWS

HARNESS RACING

'ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY'

1980

Barbara Mandrell was the featured entertainer for the 1980 Fairbury fair per the Pantagraph.

CHAPTER 14

1981 to 1990

1981

Tragedy struck the fairgrounds on June 30, 1981. The author published the following story about this tragic fire in 2024.

Sixteen Horses Lost in 1981 Fire

By: Dale C. Maley
For: FairburyNews.Net
Date: April 8, 2024

Many Fairbury residents remember the concrete block horse barns that ran parallel to South First Street and across the road from Westview Grade School. In 1981, these horse barns burned, and 16 horses were lost in this tragic fire.

Horse racing at the Fairbury Fair likely dates back to the first year of the Fairbury Fair, 1876. Automobiles only appeared in large numbers in Fairbury after 1908, when Henry Ford introduced his Model T. Before automobile racing, one of the significant events at the annual fair was horse racing.

The Sanborn Insurance Company made maps of Fairbury from 1885 to 1924. The earliest Sanborn map showing the fairground is the 1911 map. This map shows a small horse barn with 30 stalls south of the Third Street fairground entrance.

The 1911 Sanborn map also shows three horse barns in the northwest corner of the fairgrounds. These stalls ran north-south, and each barn had 40 stalls. The 1911 map does not show any horse barns parallel to First Street.

The 1924 Sanborn map shows the same horse barns as the 1911 map, except a long row of 332-foot-long racehorse stalls was added parallel to First Street. This long horse barn was built sometime between 1911 and 1924.

Around 3 AM on Tuesday, June 30, 1981, the long row of horse barns parallel to First Street burned to the ground. A total of 16 horses were lost in this fire. Seven different parties owned the 16 horses that were lost. The Livingston County Sheriff's Office estimated the total financial loss exceeded $1 million.

In financial terms, Howard Wilden "Bill" Harris (1916-2013) experienced the most significant loss in this fire. Although Harris only lost three horses, one of them, Scot Dancer, was a precious horse. This horse was the best three-year-old pacer in the State of Illinois.

Scot Dancer, the Harris standard-bearer, earned $206,000 in lifetime earnings, equaling $701,000 in today's dollars. This horse won the Governor's Cup for two-year-old Illinois-

bred pacers at the 1980 Hambletonian program at DuQuoin. In 1981, Scot Dancer was on the path to collecting another $300,000 in race purses. The projected earnings for Scot Dancer in 1981 would equal $1.02 million in today's dollars.

Frank Vaughan and his son, Mark Vaughan, lost eight active racing horses in the fire. Their best horse was Flash Magoo, a three-year-old trotter who held the track record for two-year-olds at Chicago's Maywood Park.

Si Schmidtgall lost a pair of standardbred colts in the fire. John Leonard owned the final standardbred lost in the blaze. She was a mare who had just returned to training after raising a colt. Two saddle horses owned by Mary Schmidtgall and Phil Tetley rounded out the inventory of lost animals.

The Fairbury horse barns started to burn around 3 AM on Tuesday, June 30, 1981. At about 1 AM the same night, another fire started at the Balmoral Race Track in Crete, south of Chicago. Thirty-three horses were killed in the Balmoral fire. Six people received minor injuries, including four firefighters. The firefighters were treated for minor burns and smoke inhalation.

The State of Illinois arson investigators inspected the Fairbury and Balmoral horse barns but found no evidence of arson. A total of 49 horses were lost in these two tragic fires.

In the years after the 1981 fire, attendance at the Fairbury Fair's harness races gradually declined. The last harness races were at the 2006 Fairbury Fair. Many citizens have fond memories of watching the horse races and wish they were still part of the annual Fairbury Fair.

The Pantagraph published the schedule of events for the 1981 Fairbury fair.

FAIRBURY FAIR DAYS

Illinois Valley Shows on Midway

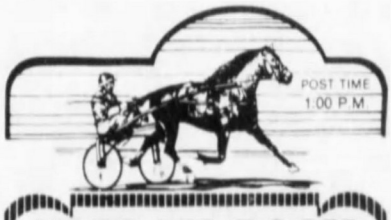
Wednesday - Sunday,
August 19-23

Free Grandstand Every Afternoon

FAMILY DAY
Reduced Rates on Rides
Wednesday, August 19

10:00 A.M. - **ROOSTER CROWING CONTEST**
1:30 P.M. - **TALENT CONTEST**
7:00 P.M. - **Midwest Racing Assoc. SPRINT CARS**

THURSDAY, August 20
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
TOM T. HALL
2 Shows
7:00 P.M. & 9:00 P.M.



HARNESS RACES
Thurs., Fri., Sat., & Sun

TOM T. HALL
2 SHOWS - 7 & 9 P.M.
Thursday, August 20

FRIDAY, August 21
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
No Time Trials
6 Cyl 40 Lap Feature

SATURDAY, August 22
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
No Time Trials
8 Cyl 50 Lap Feature

7:45 P.M.
NO TIME TRIALS
Friday & Saturday
Aug. 21-22

KIDS DAY . . .
Sunday, August 23 . . .
1 - 5 P.M.
Ride All Afternoon
for $3.50 Wristband

9:00 A.M. - FLEA MARKET
1:00 P.M. - DOG SHOW
4:30 P.M. - DRAWING FOR FREE PRIZES
6:30 P.M. - TRACTOR & TRUCK PULL

1982

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1982 Fairbury fair.

FREE GRANDSTAND
ALL AFTERNOON SHOWS
KIDS DAY SUNDAY
Most Rides Reduced Prices
DRAWING · 4:30 P.M.
FREE PRIZES

FAIRBURY FAIR

Wednesday - Sunday, August 18-22

SUNDAY, AUG. 22
FLEA MARKET
9:00 A.M.
HARNESS RACING · 1:00 P.M.
DOG SHOW · 1:00 P.M.
TRACTOR PULL
4 Wheel Drive Pickup Pull
6:30 P.M.

Reserve seat tickets for all night shows available at:
FARMERS GRAIN 692-4353
or write:
Ticket Office
Fairbury Fair
Fairbury, Ill. 61739

★ ★ JIM NEAL'S ★ ★
★ ★ ILLINOIS VALLEY AMUSEMENTS ★ ★
ON THE MIDWAY

TRACTOR PULL

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 18
TALENT SHOW
1:30 P.M.
SPRINT CAR RACES
Time Trials · 7:15 P.M.
Races · 8:00 P.M.

THURSDAY, AUG. 19
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
LOUISE MANDRELL
& R. C. BANNON
2 SHOWS
7:00 P.M. & 9:00 P.M.

FRIDAY, AUG. 20
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
No Time Trials
6 CYL. 40 LAP FEATURE

SATURDAY, AUG. 21
HARNESS RACING
1:30 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
No Time Trials
8 CYL. 50 LAP FEATURE

STOCK CAR RACES

SPRINT CAR

LOUISE MANDRELL & R.C. BANNON SHOW
THURSDAY, AUGUST 19
7:00 P.M. & 9:00 P.M.

Harness Racing

TICKET INFORMATION
815 · 692-3222

'ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY'

1983

The Pantagraph schedule for the 1983 Fairbury fair is shown below.

1984

The Pantagraph ad for this fair is shown below.

1985

The 1985 Pantagraph ad for this fair is shown below.

Short History of Fairbury Fair by Unknown Author

In 1876 Fairbury was a prosperous agricultural community in central Illinois. In that year a group of Fairburians decided to organize a Fair symbolic of their twelve year old town. The Fairbury Union Agricultural Board was formed by several farmers and mechanics with, "a desire to elevate their profession, and excite in each other a spirit of emulation and rivalry." The first annual Fairbury Agricultural Fair occurred on September 12–15, 1876 and continues 110 years later as the Fairbury Fair. Indicative of the community's stability, the Fairbury Fair perseveres in spite of national economic, political or social problems.

The Agricultural Union Board purchased 21 acres in Fairbury for $2,800 in 1876. In 1936 John Joda Post 54 of the American Legion assumed the mortgage for $6,300 and rechartered the event as the Fairbury Fair. A twelve member board, all Legionnaires, governs the Fair. Each director serves three years, and terms are staggered so there are four new members each year. Each Fair board keeps the original purpose of the Fair remarkably intact.

The Fairbury Fair remains at its original site on grounds on the south side of Fairbury, only a few blocks from Route 24. Permanent livestock barns, exhibit buildings, concessions, and ticket booths stand shuttered most of the year. A roofed wooden grandstand dominates the grounds and overlooks a quarter mile dirt track. A covered judges' stand rises on stilts opposite the center of

the grandstand. In mild weather, old track veterans lounge in the doorway of an antiquated wooden barn northeast of the grandstand. A grassy area south of that barn reminds Fair goers of the 1979 fire which totally destroyed a row of stables and killed seventeen horses. New stables were then built across the infield away from the confusion of the grandstand. Few people have access to the grounds except horse trainers and owners until the stock car races begin in the summer.

Thoroughbred and harness racing have attracted Fair crowds from the beginning. In 1901, before the invention of starting gates, Frank James, Jesse's reformed outlaw brother, drew 10,000 people to the races. He was hired because of his expertise with horses. The *Fairbury Blade* reported, "Mr. James laid the law down to the drivers and they obeyed it. The races went off without an undue amount of friction." Eventually, harness racing dominated the race bills since the small track was not as conducive to thoroughbred racing.

Frank James may have been the most famous starter, but there have been other racing celebrities at the Fair, too. A versatile horse, Scott's Billy, could pace or trot, whichever the event demanded. Illinois-bred, locally owned Chief Sammy raced nationally, but his owners always returned him for Fair week. When he died, he was buried on the Fair grounds. Another local favorite, Cherokee Prince, also raced nationally, but his career ended when he perished in the 1979 barn fire. There are favorite drivers, too. Nationally acclaimed Stan Banks from Dwight, Illinois drives his horses at the Fair. Fairburian Mark Vaughn, pursuing his career at Chicago tracks, returns home for Fair week to drive his father's horses.

While racing enthusiasts cheer their favorites, their families can walk the midway. The 1876 Fair board invited a carnival and side shows to participate. The merry-go-round operated on steam as music rolled from a hand-cranked organ. One side show in that first year never go to the grounds. "a dance show with wholly exposed female form in dance posture, multiplied with mirrors, was run out of town by church ladies." Carnival rides and game booths still attract crowds to the midway, and mechanized music competes with the barkers' demands to "play a game!"

Grandstand shows offer another diversion to Fair visitors. Bronco John and His Wonderful Wild West Show performed for enthusiastic crowds in 1900. The Fair Board of 1910 offered $25 to the best area baseball club. In the infield, teams from Fairbury and neighboring Forrest played the final game of the tournament. A dispute over an umpire's decision ended the game in the fourth inning, and the prize money was never distributed. In 1976, the Fair's centennial, Loretta Lynn packed the grandstand. Local and national talent continue to draw early evening Fair crowds to the grounds.

The discordant sounds of revving engines which fill the later evening mean yet another dimension of the Fair. Stock car races now provide the most popular entertainment. Unlike harness racing, stock car racing is held all summer. Like the harness races, though, the stocks have a rich Fair history. Eddie Rickenbacker raced there as a teenager, and Parnelli Jones and Bobby Unser drove their stock cars at the Fair in the 1950's.

A Fair visitor not seeking the thrills of racing or the excitement of the midway can browse through exhibit building and livestock barns. The 1876 Fair booklet reflects the Board's intent to recognize the entrants' talents and capabilities. As in 1876, subsequent Fair boards award prize money for dairy, horses, sheep, swine and poultry classes. In addition, they recognize textiles, painting and drawing, canning, floral arrangements and leather work. Current boards have succumbed to the flea market craze, and a Fair goer can spend hours examining countless tables of "collectibles."

Emily Dickinson once said of Amherst's annual cattle show and main social event, "The show is not the show. The people who go are the show." Above all, the Fairbury Fair has been a social event. Nineteenth century Fair visitors drove teams and buggies to the Fair and spent the entire day. The TPW railroad once offered excursion trains from Peoria to Fairbury just for Fair week. Twentieth century transportation makes the Fair accessible to scattered Fairburians. Those who do not return for the high school Alumni in May arrive for the Fair in August. My father, a native Fairburian and an avid Fair goer, once remarked that the faces in the grandstand had not changed much over the years; people find the same seats or crowd the same section of the rail year after year.

My association with the Fairbury Fair confirms my father's statement. Several weeks ago I sat in the grandstand with my parents' contemporaries just as I had as a child. My six year old son sat beside me, impatient for the end of the races. The carnival beckoned! Looking across the track, I recalled how my grandfather, a horse race judge, would shepherd my three brothers and me across the track and up the iron stairway to the judges' stand. Our vantage point for the afternoon's racing was an enviable one! Years later, my father provided my son and his cousins with a similar vantage point by hoisting them to the rail and "calling" the race as the horses swept past the grandstand.

My father's statement actually encompasses the entire Fairbury Fair. One hundred and ten years have passed since the first Fair, yet the event has remained almost intact far into the twentieth century. The credit belongs to the first Fair board for its pride in the community and to subsequent boards for not tampering with success. Ultimately, generations of Fair goers, like my family, preserve the Fair with their ongoing support and enthusiasm.

1986

The Gibson City Courier published the schedule for the 1986 Fairbury Fair,

1876-1986 The Fairbury Fair

FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS

August 20-24, 1986

KIDS DAY SUNDAY
ARMED BAND DAY
2 Free Bicycles
and
Other Prizes

RESERVE SEAT TICKETS FOR ALL NIGHT SHOWS AVAILABLE AT KECK'S AGENCY 692-2343

OR

WRITE FAIR TICKET OFFICE
FAIRBURY FAIR
FAIRBURY, ILL. 61739
Ph: 815-692-3222

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20
TALENT CONTEST 1:30 P.M.
LAZY C RODEO 7:30 P.M.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 21
THOROUGHBRED RACES 1:00 P.M.
THE KENDALLS & TWO HEARTS 8:00 P.M.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 22
HARNESS RACING
1:00 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
6 Cyl. 40 Lap Feature
No Time Trials

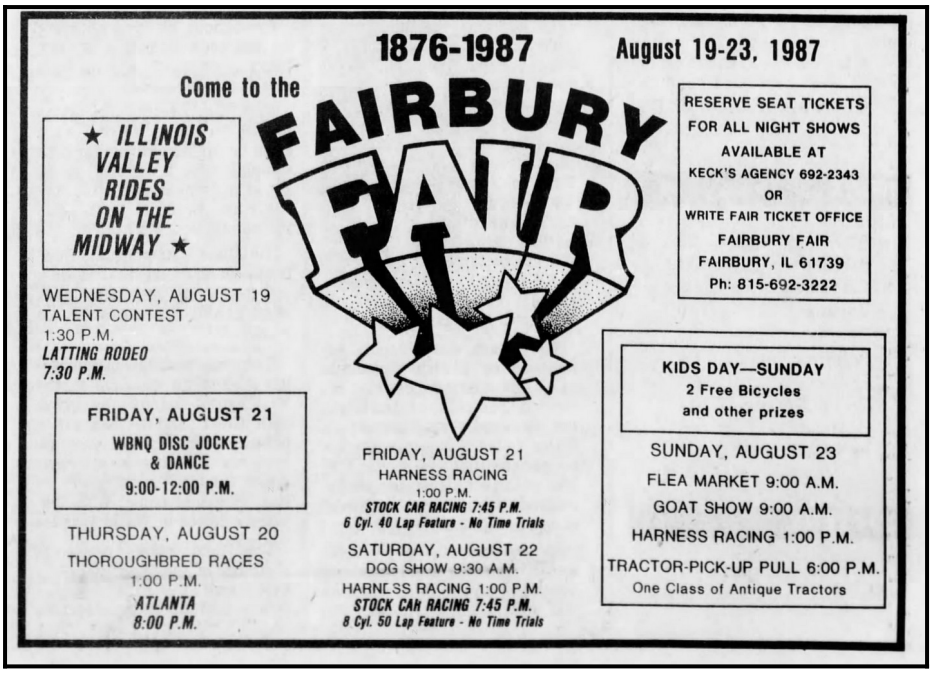
SATURDAY, AUGUST 23
DOG SHOW 9:30 A.M.
HARNESS RACING 1:00 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING
7:45 P.M.
8 Cyl. 50 Lap Feature
No Time Trials

SUNDAY, AUGUST 24
FLEA MARKET 9:00 A.M.
HARNESS RACING
1:00 P.M.
TRACTOR-PICKUP PULL
6:00 P.M.
One Class of Antique Tractors

★ JIM NEAL'S ILLINOIS VALLEY AMUSEMENTS ★

1987

The Pantagraph published an ad for the 1987 Fairbury fair.



1876-1987 August 19-23, 1987

Come to the

FAIRBURY FAIR

★ ILLINOIS VALLEY RIDES ON THE MIDWAY ★

RESERVE SEAT TICKETS FOR ALL NIGHT SHOWS AVAILABLE AT KECK'S AGENCY 692-2343 OR WRITE FAIR TICKET OFFICE FAIRBURY FAIR FAIRBURY, IL 61739 Ph: 815-692-3222

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19
TALENT CONTEST
1:30 P.M.
LATTING RODEO
7:30 P.M.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21
WBNQ DISC JOCKEY & DANCE
9:00-12:00 P.M.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20
THOROUGHBRED RACES
1:00 P.M.
ATLANTA
8:00 P.M.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21
HARNESS RACING
1:00 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING 7:45 P.M.
6 Cyl. 40 Lap Feature - No Time Trials

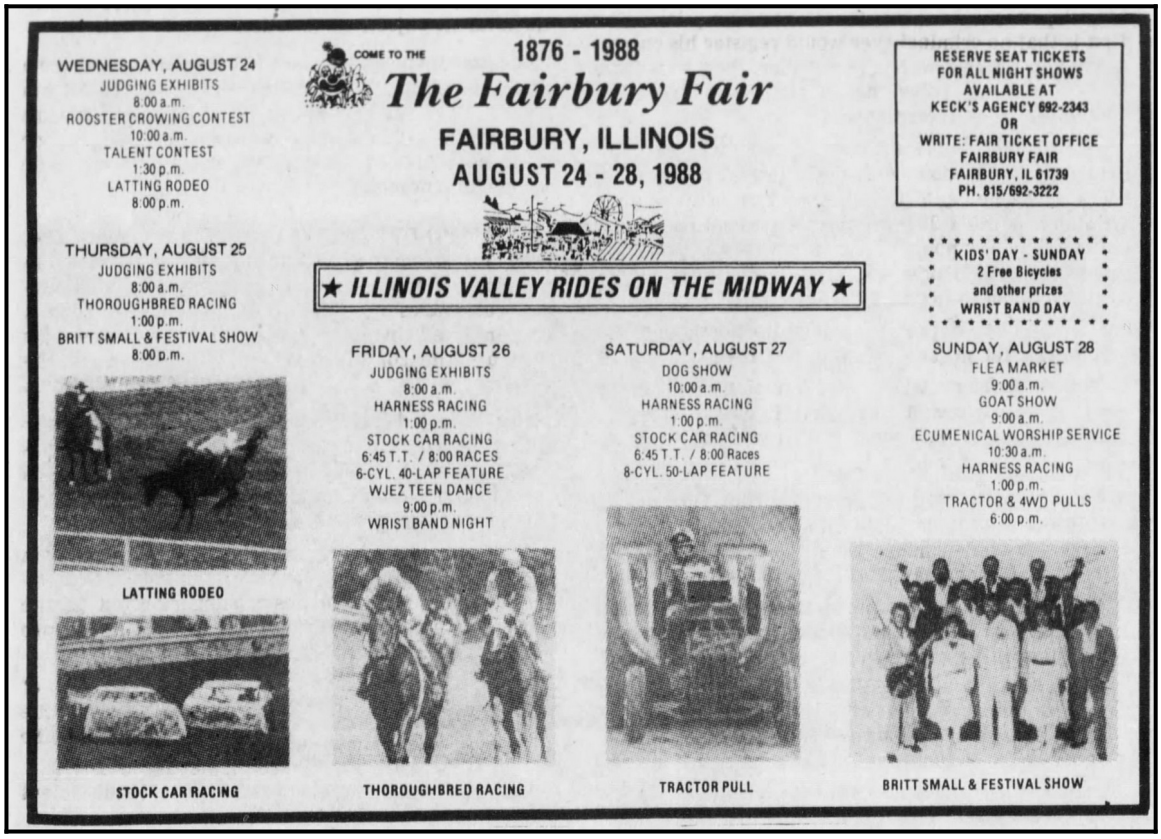
SATURDAY, AUGUST 22
DOG SHOW 9:30 A.M.
HARNESS RACING 1:00 P.M.
STOCK CAR RACING 7:45 P.M.
8 Cyl. 50 Lap Feature - No Time Trials

KIDS DAY—SUNDAY
2 Free Bicycles
and other prizes

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23
FLEA MARKET 9:00 A.M.
GOAT SHOW 9:00 A.M.
HARNESS RACING 1:00 P.M.
TRACTOR-PICK-UP PULL 6:00 P.M.
One Class of Antique Tractors

1988

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1988 Fairbury fair.



1989

The schedule for this fair was published in the Pantagraph.

1990

The Pantagraph ran the story below about the 1990 Fairbury fair.

Attractions corral fairgoers' interest

FAIRBURY — The 114th annual Fairbury Fair opened yesterday with a flurry of activity as show-men prepared their livestock for judging and youngsters lined up for carnival rides on the midway. The show barns were the focal point for much of the activity, with dairy cattle, sheep, swine, poultry and rabbit judging running from early morning to late afternoon.

A small crowd assembled for the 10 a.m. rooster crowing contest watched youngsters use a number of ploys to induce their sometimes uncooperative birds into crowing, including one boy who threatened to have his rooster made into chicken nuggets.

Talent show, rides in the afternoon, the attention of some fairgoers shifted to the annual talent contest and the carnival rides. Those interested in livestock, however, will have

more to watch during the fair than in recent years, said Lyle Wessels, acting fair secretary. "Many of the exhibits are up," Wessels said, referring to an increase in the number of hogs, sheep and other livestock.

Sheep Superintendent Kenneth Metz said the 342 sheep registered represent the largest flock at the fair in more than 30 years. Wessels said some exhibitors came from Cook County, Lacon, Henry, Kewanee, Charleston and other communities outside Livingston County.

Although a drought the past three years hurt agriculture in the area, Wessels said it didn't dampen the spirits of many fair-goers. "I don't think the drought really affected the attitude of the people that much," Wessels said, adding, "I think people come to the fair because they look forward to having a good time."

It's the anticipation of those good times that has brought Elmer G. Hallock to the fair for 54 years. Hallock, 70, will be retiring as fair treasurer after this year's event concludes Sunday night. "I'm going to miss not being in here (the fair office) because I've been here all my life. was raised here," said Hallock, who volunteered to take tickets at the merry-go-round when he was in the seventh grade.

Hallock also volunteered his time as a ticket taker before being appointed fair treasurer 39 years ago. Although his pay as fair treasurer averages only about 44 cents per hour, Hallock said he has had no regrets.

"I've enjoyed it really and I'll miss it," he said. "You see a lot of your old friends that have moved away who come back to the Fair-bury Fair," he added. His position as fair treasurer also has allowed Hallock to meet many of the event's featured entertainers, including Grandpa Jones, Dolly Parton, Frank Sinatra Jr., Barbara and Louise Mandrell and Loretta Lynn.

Although he met many of the fair's big names, his job kept him too busy to see many of their performances. "I've had a box seat for 39 years and I haven't sat in it for more than 20 minutes at a time," Hallock said, adding he will have more time to enjoy the entertainment next year.

Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

Photographs from the 1990s

CHAPTER 15

1991 to 2000

1991

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1991 Fairbury fair.

1992

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1992 Fairbury fair.

FAIR DAYS

FAIRBURY FAIR — Aug. 26-30

Aug. 26

WEDNESDAY — FAMILY DAY

8:00 A.M. — Judging of Exhibits
10:00 A.M. — Rooster Crowing Contest
1:30 P.M. — Talent Contest
7:30 P.M. — World Famous Demolition Derby
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway

THURSDAY — SENIOR CITIZEN'S DAY

8:00 A.M. — Judging of Exhibits
1:00 P.M. — Thoroughbred Racing
1:00 P.M. — Horse-Pony Youth Program
6:30 P.M. — Time Trials
7:30 P.M. — Stock Car Races
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
Live Music at Beerstand—"Mainstreet" 4:30-7 p.m.

Aug. 27

Aug. 28

FRIDAY — TEEN NITE-WRISTBAND

8:00 A.M. — Judging of Exhibits
12:45 P.M. — Music
1:00 P.M. — Harness Racing
8:00 P.M. — Bill Anderson Show
9:00 P.M. — WJEZ teen dance
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
Live Music at Beerstand-"Mainstreet"-4:30-7 p.m.

NITE

SATURDAY — RACE DAY

10:00 A.M. — Dog Show
12:45 P.M. — Music
1:00 P.M. — Harness Racing
1:30 P.M. — Cat Show
6:30 P.M. — Time Trials
7:30 P.M. — Stock Car Racing
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway

Live Music at Beerstand "Mainstreet" 4:30-7 p.m.

Aug. 29

Aug. 30

SUNDAY — KIDS DAY — WRISTBAND

9:00 A.M. — Goat Show
9:00 A.M. — Flea Market
12:45 P.M. — Music
1:00 P.M. — Harness Racing
5:00 P.M. — Drawing for Free Prizes
5:30 P.M. — Tractor and Truck Pulls

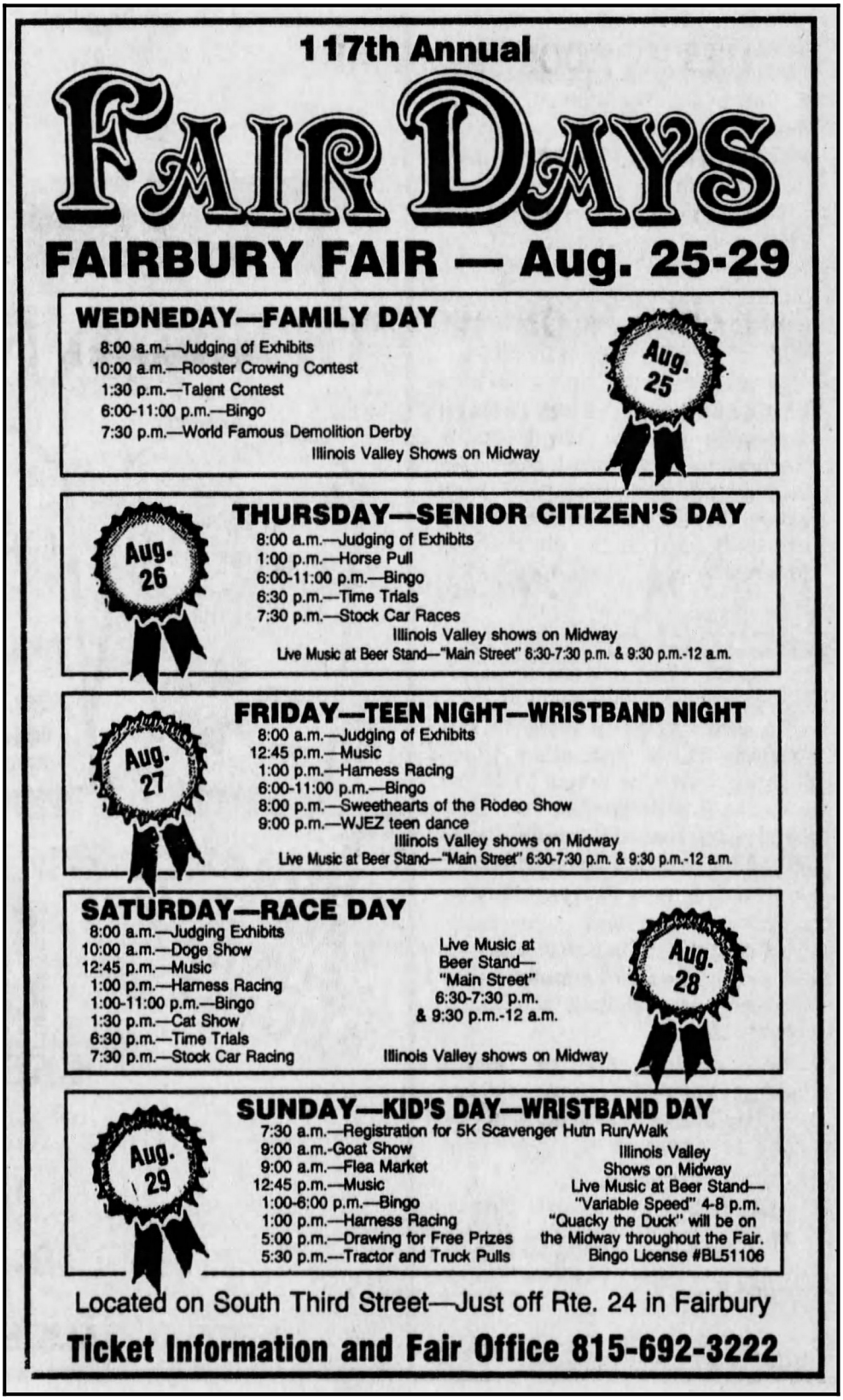
DAY

Located on South Third Street—Just off Rte. 24 in Fairbury

Ticket Information and Fair Office 815-692-3222

1993

The Pantagraph ad for the 1993 Fairbury fair is shown below.


117th Annual
FAIR DAYS
FAIRBURY FAIR — Aug. 25-29
WEDNEDAY—FAMILY DAY
8:00 a.m.—Judging of Exhibits
10:00 a.m.—Rooster Crowing Contest
1:30 p.m.—Talent Contest
6:00-11:00 p.m.—Bingo
7:30 p.m.—World Famous Demolition Derby
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
Aug. 25
THURSDAY—SENIOR CITIZEN'S DAY
8:00 a.m.—Judging of Exhibits
1:00 p.m.—Horse Pull
6:00-11:00 p.m.—Bingo
6:30 p.m.—Time Trials
7:30 p.m.—Stock Car Races
Illinois Valley shows on Midway
Live Music at Beer Stand—"Main Street" 6:30-7:30 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.-12 a.m.
Aug. 26
FRIDAY—TEEN NIGHT—WRISTBAND NIGHT
8:00 a.m.—Judging of Exhibits
12:45 p.m.—Music
1:00 p.m.—Harness Racing
6:00-11:00 p.m.—Bingo
8:00 p.m.—Sweethearts of the Rodeo Show
9:00 p.m.—WJEZ teen dance
Illinois Valley shows on Midway
Live Music at Beer Stand—"Main Street" 6:30-7:30 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.-12 a.m.
Aug. 27
SATURDAY—RACE DAY
8:00 a.m.—Judging Exhibits
10:00 a.m.—Doge Show
12:45 p.m.—Music
1:00 p.m.—Harness Racing
1:00-11:00 p.m.—Bingo
1:30 p.m.—Cat Show
6:30 p.m.—Time Trials
7:30 p.m.—Stock Car Racing
Live Music at Beer Stand—"Main Street" 6:30-7:30 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.-12 a.m.
Illinois Valley shows on Midway
Aug. 28
SUNDAY—KID'S DAY—WRISTBAND DAY
7:30 a.m.—Registration for 5K Scavenger Hutn Run/Walk
9:00 a.m.-Goat Show
9:00 a.m.—Flea Market
12:45 p.m.—Music
1:00-6:00 p.m.—Bingo
1:00 p.m.—Harness Racing
5:00 p.m.—Drawing for Free Prizes
5:30 p.m.—Tractor and Truck Pulls
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
Live Music at Beer Stand—"Variable Speed" 4-8 p.m.
"Quacky the Duck" will be on the Midway throughout the Fair.
Bingo License #BL51106
Aug. 29
Located on South Third Street—Just off Rte. 24 in Fairbury
Ticket Information and Fair Office 815-692-3222

A rather unusual wedding also took place at the 1993 Fairbury Fair. According to the *Blade*, Fairbury native Kay Bazzell was 15 years old when she attended the fair and developed a crush on the operator of the Tilt-a-Whirl ride, Jim Lester, who was 22 at the time.

Fifteen years later, the couple was married at the Fairbury Fair. Before the ceremony, one Tilt-a-Whirl seat was decorated with streamers. After the wedding, instead of running down church steps and dodging rice, the couple broke through a gate of streamers, settled into their Tilt-a-Whirl seat, and were pelted with birdseed as the ride slowly turned in circles to the applause of the crowd.

The newlyweds both worked for Illinois Valley Rides. Lester, who had operated the Tilt-a-Whirl for 17 years, was serving as a maintenance man for all 15 rides. His bride worked as a cook in the corn dog wagon.

For six months out of the year, they traveled with the carnival within a 200-mile radius of Peoria, providing a main attraction for children of all ages. Lester noted that Fairbury was one of the ride company's biggest stops.

There were no immediate plans for a honeymoon, "not yet, anyway," he said. However, the new Mrs. Lester mentioned that in October the couple planned a trip on the Par-A-Dice riverboat.

The bride in her wedding dress at the 1993 Fairbury Fair. Photo courtesy of Irv Metz.

1994

The Pantagraph ad for the 1994 Fairbury fair is shown below.

118th Annual
FAIR DAYS
FAIRBURY FAIR—Aug. 17-21
WEDNESDAY—FAMILY DAY—REDUCED RIDES
8:00 a.m.—Judging of Exhibits
10:00 a.m.—Rooster Crowing Contest
1:30 p.m.—Talent Contest
6:30 p.m.—Tractor and Truck Pulls
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
AUG. 17
AUG. 18
THURSDAY—SENIOR CITIZEN DAY
8:00 a.m.—Judging of Exhibits
12:30 p.m.—Fun & Games
Horse/Pony Youth Program
1:00-2:00 p.m.—Ronald McDonald will be on Midway
6:30 p.m.—Time Trials
7:30 p.m.—Stock Car Races—Central Illinois Dirt Shootout
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
AUG. 19
FRIDAY—TEEN NIGHT—WRISTBAND NIGHT
Ride all night for one price
8:00 a.m.—Judging of Exhibits
12:30 p.m.—Harness Racing
8:00 p.m.—Boy Howdy Show
9:00 p.m.—WJEZ Teen Dance
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
SATURDAY
8:00 a.m.—Fairbury Fair Scavenger Hunt
5K Walk-Run
10:00 a.m.—Dog Show
12:30 p.m.—Harness Racing
1:30 p.m.—Cat Show
6:30 p.m.—Time Trials
7:30 p.m.—Stock Car Racing—Central Illinois Dirt Shootout
Illinois Valley Shows on Midway
AUG. 20
AUG. 21
SUNDAY—KIDS DAY—WRISTBAND DAY
Ride all afternoon for one price
9:00 a.m.—Goat Show
9:00 a.m.—Auto Show
12:30 p.m.—Harness Racing
5:00 p.m.—Drawing for Free Prizes
5:30 p.m.—World Famous Demolition Derby—Aug. 21
Live music daily at the beer stand
Late afternoons and evenings
Located on South Third Street—Just off Rte. 24 in Fairbury
DICK STONER "THE MAGICAL LAUGHMASTER"
ON THE MIDWAY DAILY
Ticket Information and Fair Office 815-692-3222

1995

In January of 1995, the Pantagraph reported there were some Director changes at the Fairbury Fair.

> **Fairbury Fair Board selects Officers**
>
> FAIRBURY — The Fairbury Fair board of directors has elected officers and appointed new board members. New officers are Bud Gerber, president, and Tom Miles, vice president, both of Fairbury. Appointments were made by the executive board of the John Joda American Legion Post to replace retiring Fair Board directors.
>
> New board directors are Paul Augsburger, George Goodwin and Jim "Irv" Metz, all of Fairbury.
>
> Retiring directors include Dennis Kaisner, Wayne Ziller and Dick Kirchner, all of Fairbury. Kaisner served the board for 17 years, including 10 as president; Ziller served 24 years, including 16 as vice president; and Kirchner served for six years.
>
> Other directors of the board are Donald Gray, Ray Greenwell, Joe Keeley, Everett Meister, Steve Ricketts, Lloyd Runyon and Secretary Clarence Simpson, all of Fairbury. Bill Fugate and Lori Maley, both of Fairbury, will continue in their respective positions of fair secretary and fair treasurer. The Fairbury Fair board sponsors summer stock car races and the Fairbury Fair scheduled for Aug. 16 through 20.

It is believed the Pantagraph misspelled the name of Tom Mies and reported it as Tom Miles in the article above.

The featured performer for the 1995 Fairbury fair was singer Rhett Akins. He went on to become best known as a writer of hit songs.

> Rhett Akins had radio success in the mid-1990s with songs like “That Ain’t My Truck” and “Don’t Get Me Started,” but his solo chart presence tapered off in the 2000s.
>
> Over the last 15–20 years he has become one of Nashville’s top hit writers, with dozens of No. 1 country singles recorded by stars such as Blake Shelton, Jason Aldean, and his son Thomas Rhett, and he has won major industry awards including ACM Songwriter of the Year and the ACM Songwriter of the Decade.
>
> He’s highly respected and influential in country music, though many younger fans know his songs more than they know him as a performer.

1996

In April of 1996, the Livingston County Board passed a new law requested by the Fairbury Fair Board as reported by the Pantagraph.

> The board also adopted an ordinance that allows charitable organizations to legally conduct raffles with a county license that can be obtained free of charge. State law now

prohibits raffles and other games of chance without a license issued by a local government body,

The ordinance was prompted by calls from Fairbury Fair officials, who were told last summer by state officials that they could not legally conduct a raffle without a local license. Raffle licenses can be obtained through the Livingston County clerk's office.

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1996 Fairbury fair.

Come to

The Fairbury Fair!

August 14 - 18, 1996

Wednesday, August 14
1:30 P.M. - Talent Contest
7:30 P.M. - Big Hat Rodeo

Thursday, August 15
12:30 P.M. - Horse/Pony Youth Program
6:30 P.M. - Time Trials
7:30 P.M. - Midget & Stock Car Racing

Friday, August 16
12:30 P.M. - Harness Racing
8:00 P.M. - Ty Herndon Show
Teen Night - Wristband Night
9:00 P.M. - Teen Dance

Saturday, August 17
12:30 P.M. - Harness Racing
6:30 P.M. - Time Trials
7:30 P.M. - Stock Car Racing

Sunday, August 18
9:00 A.M. - Car Show
Kids Day - Wristband Day
1:00 P.M. - Demolition Derby
6:00 P.M. - Demolition Derby

Every Day:
Quacky the Duck
Millers Petting Zoo
Judging of Exhibits

Ticket Information and Reservations:
Through August 5 - (815)692-2343
August 7 - 18 - (815)692-3222

1997

Trace Adkins was the featured performer for the 1997 Fairbury fair. The Pantagraph published the following story about him,

No more beer joints for Trace Adkins

Trace Adkins is the long and lanky former oil driller who's finally made it to the big time in country music after singing for almost all of his 35 years of life. "I've played beer joints for 10 years — I just took my beer joint songs onto bigger things," he said in an interview with The Pantagraph.

Adkins will appear in concert at the Fairbury Fair at 8 p.m. Friday. Grandstand tickets are $7 and $8 and standing room only tickets at the front of the stage are $10, available at the fair-grounds box office or by calling the fair office at (815) 692-3222.

Adkins, who calls his club songs "combat country," was playing a honky-tonk just outside Mount Juliet, Tenn., when Scott Hendricks, new Capitol Nashville president and CEO came to listen. By then the Louisiana native had been working and hanging around Nashville for two years. He scarcely believed it when Hendricks asked if he would be his first signing at Capitol Nashville.

Hendricks also produces Alan Jackson, Restless Heart, Faith Hill, John Michael Montgomery and Brooks and Dunn, among others.

Since his "signing" Adkins has had top charting hits including "There's a Girl in Texas," "Every Light In the House Is On," "This Ain't No Thinkin' Thing," (went to No. 1), and his current, "I Left Something Turned On At Home," (at No. 2 last week.)

His video for "Every Light In the House Is On," has been nominated for video of the year by the CMA. He also has been nominated for the Horizon Award, the only male in the group of five nominees. The award show is Sept. 24. Adkins said, "I'm living a dream at the top of my lungs!"

No one can mistake Adkins' voice for anybody else's. His deep baritone has been call "resonant, smooth as molasses baritone," and "a whiskey-barrel voice, dark and deep enough to rattle your insides."

As part of his first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry, Adkins proposed on bended knee to his wife, Rhonda Forlaw. They were married in May. He has two daughters from his first marriage, Tarah, 12, and Sarah, 9.

"The girls are proud and happy and at first were pretty-awestruck," Adkins said. "Now they aren't so much — they still see me out there mowin' the yard."

Adkins said he is lucky to have a producer who has a reputation for good material. "There are so many wonderful songs out there, it's hard to turn them down. We usually pick a song and listen to it for about a week and then decide if we still like it," he said.

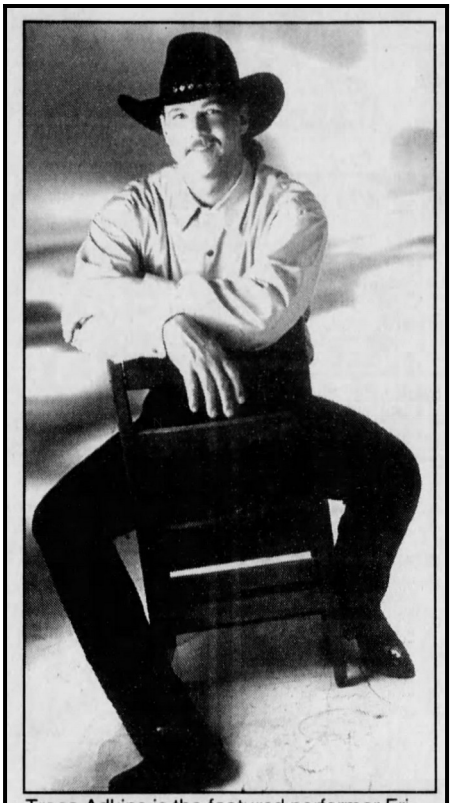
Adkins admitted that right now he has put his own songwriting on a back burner. "When you're actively traveling, there's not much time. I get on the bus, travel all night, get to a town, get my day going in the morning, do a show at night and get back on the bus," he said.

Adkins said he has 20 shows to do in August, and even more in October. "In October, November and into December I'll be touring with Tracy Lawrence," he said. "I've opened shows for a lot of people, but this is the first time I'll be on the road with an artist for a prolonged time."

He said he was very proud of his video for "All of the Lights In the House Are On." "I'm proud of the video nomination by the CMA. When we were done filming it, we knew it was good, and we smoked big cigars and smiled a lot. It's great to know that other people like it too," he said.

Adkins will be going to San Diego to make a video of his newest single, "The Rest of Mine," from a new album, "Big Time." The single is due out Aug. 25 and the album is due out Oct. 21.

"I didn't know where I was bound, but music. has always been a part of my life — one of the things I know how to do, except drill oil wells," he said. Also, Adkins doesn't get too cocky about his; early success. "Country music today is a corporate monster. You have to be real serious about it," he said.



Trace Adkins is the featured performer Friday at the Fairbury Fair. The show starts at 8 p.m.

1998

The Pantagraph published the following description of the 1998 Fairbury fair. James Bonamy was the featured entertainer.

> **FAIRBURY** — Stock car racing, a rodeo and demolition derbies in addition to exhibit and livestock judging and a talent contest are on tap for the 122nd Fairbury Fair. The event will begin Wednesday, with a setup day on Tuesday, and run through Aug. 23 at the Fairbury Fairground.
>
> Daily events include a petting zoo, Doc Barth Medicine Show, and Chain Saw Artists.
>
> Bluestem Country Music Night on Aug. 21 will feature the James Bonamy Show. Admission at the gate is: adult, $2; children, ages 6-12, $1. On Aug. 20, Buddy Day, admission will be free at the gate until 4 p.m. Adult season tickets cost $8 and children season tickets are $5. Parking is $2 and camping is $10 per unit daily.
>
> Grandstand admissions are: Big Hat Rodeo, box seats and general admission, $5; children, 6-12, free; midget and stock car racing, grandstand, general admission, and bleachers $8, children under age 12, free; James Bonamy Show, grandstand: blue section, $10; red section, $8: gray section, $7; box seats and S.R.O. Track, $10; demolition derby, each show, grand-stand and box seats, $6, children age 12 and under, free.
>
> Illinois Valley Rides will be on the Midway. Family Day is Aug. 19 when rides will be at a reduced price. On Buddy Day, a wristband allows fairgoers to ride rides in the evening; and on Aug. 23, Kids Day, a wristband allows fairgoers to ride rides from noon to 5 p.m.
>
> The 4-H and Open Fun & Games Horse/Pony Youth Program begins at 12:30 p.m. Aug. 19. Riders in the junior division, age 11 and younger, and senior division, ages 12-19, will participate in rider barrel exchange races; pole bending; junior and senior Apple Bob Races; egg & spoon pick-up rescue races; barrel race; goat tail tie; flag and sack races.
>
> Harness racing is scheduled at 12:30 p.m. Aug. 21 and 22, and at 1 p.m. Aug. 23, an NPA toy truck and tractor pull is slated.

1999

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 1999 Fairbury fair.

Fair schedule

WEDNESDAY
(Family Day)
8 a.m. — Judging of exhibits.
10 a.m. — Rooster crowing contest.
12:30 p.m. — Horse and pony youth program.
1 and 7 p.m. — Red Cross blood drawing, Legion House.
7 p.m. — Latting Rodeo.

THURSDAY
(Buddy Day)
8 a.m. — Judging of exhibits.
10 a.m. — Educational seminars: food demonstrations.
10:30 a.m. — Textile demonstrations.
11 a.m. & 2:30 p.m. — Demonstrations using flowers.
12:30 p.m. - Talent contest.
8 p.m. — Gary Allen country show.

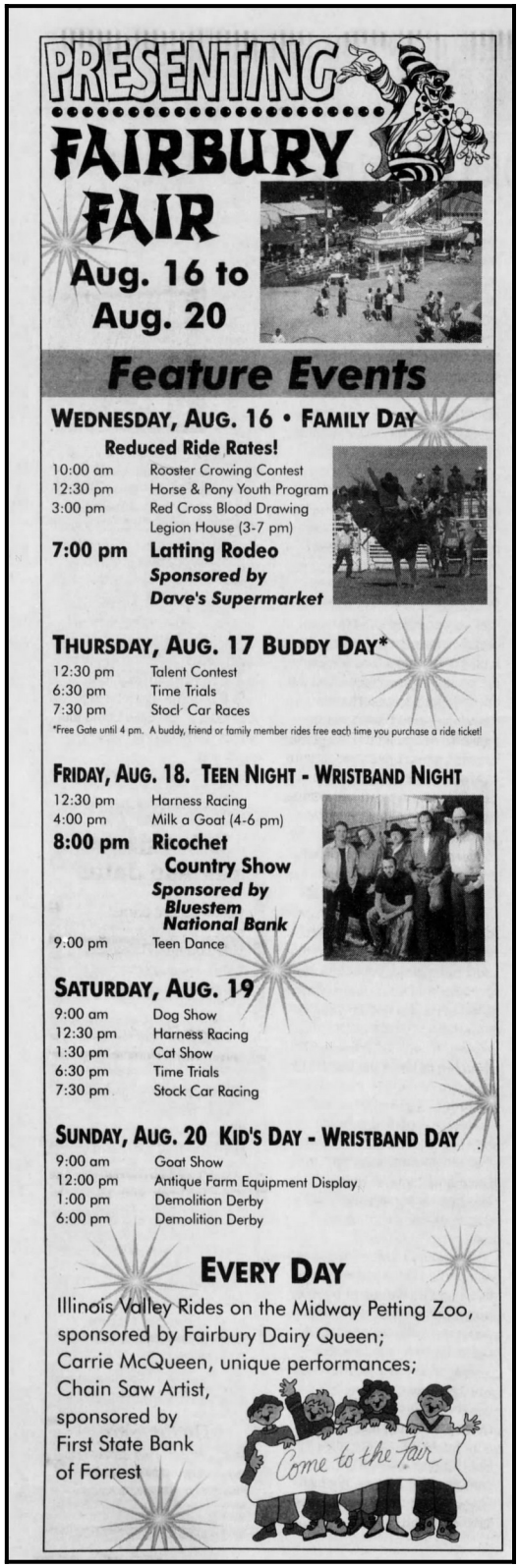
FRIDAY
(Teen and Wristband Night)
8 a.m. — Judging of exhibits.
12:30 p.m. — Harness racing.
1:30 p.m. — Bread dough flowers.
2:30 p.m. — Make and take.
7:30 p.m. — Stock car races.
9 p.m. — Teen Dance.

SATURDAY
9 a.m. — Dog show.
12:30 p.m. — Harness racing.
1:30 p.m. — Cat show.
6:30 p.m. — Stock car time trials.
7:30 p.m. — Stock car racing.

SUNDAY
(Kids Day-Wristband Day)
9 a.m. — Goat show.
Noon — Antique farm equipment display.
1 p.m. — Demolition Derby.
6:30 p.m. — Demolition Derby.

2000

The Pantagraph ad for the 2000 Fairbury fair is shown below.


PRESENTING
FAIRBURY FAIR
Aug. 16 to Aug. 20
Feature Events
WEDNESDAY, AUG. 16 • FAMILY DAY
Reduced Ride Rates!
10:00 am Rooster Crowing Contest
12:30 pm Horse & Pony Youth Program
3:00 pm Red Cross Blood Drawing
Legion House (3-7 pm)
7:00 pm Latting Rodeo
Sponsored by Dave's Supermarket
THURSDAY, AUG. 17 BUDDY DAY*
12:30 pm Talent Contest
6:30 pm Time Trials
7:30 pm Stock Car Races
*Free Gate until 4 pm. A buddy, friend or family member rides free each time you purchase a ride ticket!
FRIDAY, AUG. 18. TEEN NIGHT - WRISTBAND NIGHT
12:30 pm Harness Racing
4:00 pm Milk a Goat (4-6 pm)
8:00 pm Ricochet Country Show
Sponsored by Bluestem National Bank
9:00 pm Teen Dance
SATURDAY, AUG. 19
9:00 am Dog Show
12:30 pm Harness Racing
1:30 pm Cat Show
6:30 pm Time Trials
7:30 pm Stock Car Racing
SUNDAY, AUG. 20 KID'S DAY - WRISTBAND DAY
9:00 am Goat Show
12:00 pm Antique Farm Equipment Display
1:00 pm Demolition Derby
6:00 pm Demolition Derby
EVERY DAY
Illinois Valley Rides on the Midway Petting Zoo, sponsored by Fairbury Dairy Queen;
Carrie McQueen, unique performances;
Chain Saw Artist, sponsored by First State Bank of Forrest
Come to the fair

Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

Photographs from the 1990s

Chapter 16

2001 to 2010

The Pantagraph announced the featured acts for the 2001 Fairbury fair.

Country acts set for Fairbury Fair

FAIRBURY — Country music artists Darryl Worley and Patty Jo Timmons have been signed as the grandstand attractions for this summer's Fairbury Fair.

They will perform at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 17.

Worley is a lanky baritone, whose first album "Hard Rain Don't Last," produced the single, "Good Day To Run." A native Tennessean, he has performed from an early age. His single is receiving radio recognition and is climbing the musical charts.

Featured on the Worley show will be Illinois native Patty Jo Timmons, a nominee for Best Country Album in 1998 and 1999 and voted Country Entertainer of the Year in 1998, all at the Chicago Music Awards. She was also nominated for Country Entertainer of the Year in 2000.

Darryl Worley

Patty Jo Timmons

The Pantagraph published a description of the 2001 Fairbury fair and the schedule.

Fairbury fair reaches 125 year

FAIRBURY — The 125th anniversary of the Fairbury Fair will be Wednesday through Sunday at the fairground in Fairbury.

Memorabilia of past fairs will be displayed from 1 to 4 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, with this year's fair book dedicated to Wayne Ziller Jr. for his many years of service at the fair and American Legion Speedway.

Ziller was a member of the fair board for 24 years, serving as its vice president for 16 years.

Though he retired from the board in 1994, he continues to help at the race track.

Entertainment this year for fairgoers will include a talent show, wrestling, harness and stock car racing and a demolition derby.

Singer Patty Jo Timmons, who will be performing with country singer Darryl Worley, will highlight the entertainment schedule Friday night. Other acts include stiltwalker and stage performer Carrie McQueen, The Calhouns and the Studebaker Stage, all of whom will perform daily.

Judging of agriculture products, textiles, fine arts, dairy/apiary/culinary, models and other junior departments will be Tuesday.

Admission prices are $2 for adults and $1 for ages 6 to 12 at the gate. Season adult tickets cost $8 for adults and $5 for children.

Prices vary for grandstand acts and other events, such as the stock car races and demolition derby.

2001 fair schedule

Wednesday — Family Day

8 a.m. — Judging of exhibits; poultry, rabbit and junior swine judging
8:30 a.m. — Dairy cattle, junior dairy and fine arts judging
9:30 a.m. — Floriculture judging
10 a.m. — Rooster crowing contest
1 p.m. — Swine judging
1 to 7 p.m. — Red Cross blood drawing, Legion house
2 to 6 p.m. — Chair caning
7 p.m. — Talent contest

Thursday — Buddy Day (free gate until 4 p.m.)

9:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. — Terrarium demonstrations
10:30 a.m. — Pampered chef demonstration
12:30 p.m. — Horse & Pony Youth Program
2 and 4 p.m. — Sheep shearing by Harold Davis
7 p.m. — Windy City Wrestling

Friday — Teen Night/Wristband Night

8 a.m. — Judging of exhibits; beef and sheep judging
11 a.m. — Harness racing
1 to 7 p.m. — Scroll sawing
1:30 p.m. — Steer judging
4 to 5 p.m. — Milk-A-Goat
7:30 p.m. — Patty Jo Timmons and Darryl Worley
9 p.m. — Teen dance

Saturday

8 a.m. — Market lamb show; junior sheep judging
9 a.m. — Dog show
10 a.m. — Mini-rod and garden-tractor pull
1:30 p.m. — Cat show
6:30 p.m. — Stock car time trials
7:30 p.m. — Stock car races

Sunday — Kid's Day/Wristband Day

9 a.m. — Dairy goat show
Noon — Antique farm equipment
1 p.m. — Demolition derby
1 to 3 p.m. — Blacksmith demonstration

2002

The Pantagraph published the schedule for the 2002 Fairbury fair.

2003

The Pantagraph ad for the 2003 Fairbury fair is shown below.

127th ANNUAL
Fairbury Fair 2003
Wednesday, Aug. 13th
through Sunday, August 17th
FEATURE EVENTS
Wednesday, August 13 - Family Day
8:00 am Judging of Exhibits
10:00 am Rooster Crowing Contest
12 Noon Floral Hall Opens
3-7:00 pm Red Cross Blood Drive, Legion House
7:00 pm Demolition Derby
Thursday, August 14 -Buddy Day
FREE GATE until 4 p.m.
9:30 am Educational Demonstrations
12:30 pm Horse & Pony Youth Program
1:00 pm Educational Demonstrations
7:00 pm "The Brittles"
Friday, August 15 - Teen NIght
WRISTBAND NIGHT
8:00 am Judging of Exhibits
2:00 pm Talent Show
2:00 pm Kiddie Tractor Pull
7:00 pm "Four Sisters & a Cousin"
9:00 pm Teen Dance
Saturday, August 16
9:00 am Dog Show
12:30 pm Harness Racing
1:30 pm Cat Show
6:30 pm Time Trials
7:30 pm Stock Car Racing
Sunday, August 17 - Kid's Day
9:00 am Goat Show
12:00 pm Antique Farm Equipment Display
1:00 pm Harness Racing
EVERYDAY
Illinois Valley Rides on the Midway
Miller's Petting Zoo
April and Her Wild West Puppets
RIch Pearl's Hat Wagon
348138

2004

The Pantagraph published a letter written by Fairbury Mayor Robert Walters thanking the Fairbury volunteers for putting a great 2004 Fairbury fair.

Fairbury Fair success because of volunteers

The 128th Fairbury Fair was a wonderful success! The members of the Fairbury Fair Board and the many volunteers who made this event so memorable are to be thanked and applauded.

This venture is huge and can only be successful if the workers are there and willingly give of their time and energy to prepare. The expectations of the community were far surpassed by the exceptional quality of this year's fair.

The Luehrs Ideal Rides Company provided a very clean and professional midway for the attendees to enjoy. The cleanliness of the equipment, food stands and employees were definitely a plus for the fair. Many of those workers were very friendly and polite as they helped children and adults to enter and exit the various rides they provided. What a great addition to the Fairbury Fair.

The entire program of the fair this year provided enjoyable experiences and memories for those who attended. The rodeo, stock car races, talent show, veterans' celebration and other special grandstand events were varied and appealing to a wide variety of attendees.

The Fairbury Fair program was well planned and organized to meet the needs of those who visited during this week.

Volunteerism is alive and doing quite well in small communities like ours. The residents of Fairbury and the surrounding area were fortunate to experience it at a very high level. I am looking forward to the 129th Fairbury Fair.

Mayor Robert P. Walter Jr.

Fairbury

2005

The schedule for the 2005 Fairbury fair is shown below.

Wednesday August 17th	
8:00am	Judging of Exhibits
10:00am	Rooster Crowing contest
12:00 Noon	Floral Hall Opens
3:00-7:00pm	Red Cross Blood Drawing-Legion House
6:00pm	Luehr's Ideal Rides Begin on Midway
7:00pm	Demo Derby-$6.00 Grandstand-12 & under Free

Thursday August 18th $1.00 Gate	
12:30 pm	
6:00 pm	Luehr's Ideal Rides Begin on Midway-$1.00
7:00pm	Lawn Mower Racing-Grandstand

Friday August 19th	
8:00am	Judging of Exhibits
12:30pm	Horse and Pony Show
2:00pm	
2:00pm	Luehr's Ideal Rides Begin on Midway
7:00pm	Beach Pary with Captain Rat and the Blind Rivots
9:00pm	
9:00pm	Teen Dance-East end of Fairgrounds

Saturday August 20th	
9:00am	
12:30 pm	Harness Racing-FREE Grandstand
1:30pm	
2:00pm	Luehr's Ideal Rides Begin on Midway
6:30pm	Stock Car Races Begin-NO TIMETRIALS

Sunday August 21st-Dollar Day $1.00 Gate	
9:00am	Goat Show
10:00am-12 noon	Setup for Chili contest
12:00pm	Antique Farm Equipment Display
12:00pm	Cooking Begins for Chili Contest
1:00pm-1:30pm	Showmanship for Chili Contest
1:00pm	Harness Racing-FREE Grandstand
1:00pm	Luehr's Ideal Rides Begin on Midway
3:30pm	Kiddie Pedal Tractor Pull
4:00pm	Judging begins for People Choice-Chili Contest-Public invited-$1.00
4:30pm	Auction Wood Carvings
5:00pm	Winners of Chili Contest Announced
6:00pm	Talent Show

2006

This was the last year of horse racing at the Fairbury Fair. Horse racing was a key part of the Fairbury fair for about 130 years.

The Pantagraph published the article below about the Fairbury fair selling cook books as a fund-raiser.

FAIRBURY — Food and the Fairbury Fair have gone hand-in-hand for 130 years.

To honor that relationship and history, fair organizers have produced a cookbook with more than 350 recipes. Proceeds will help defray the costs of the fair.

"We wanted to try out something different to try and raise money," said Terri Wells, who organized the cookbook. "We have seen other groups have a lot of success with cookbooks."

Cookbooks can be purchased at the treasurer's office at the Third Street entrance of the fair.

The fair continues its run through Sunday with food, carnival rides and nightly special events. Several homemade jellies, pies and cakes are on display.

The third annual chili cook-off will be Sunday. The 16 entries will be judged on taste, aroma, color and consistency. The chili must be cooked on site.

More than 100 people donated recipes, some of which won blue ribbons at past fairs. Some recipes honor past fair board members and superintendents.

The book also honors the history of the fair with pictures. Wells said the cover photo is of John Virgin, the first president of the fair.

"It seemed fitting to put him on the cover," she said. "There are both old and new pictures. It's a good way to commemorate the anniversary and can be a great souvenir."

Jay Walter, director of the fair, said Wells came up with the idea of the book and put in a lot of work to complete it.

"Anything that we can do to help raise money is a good thing," he said. "A lot of work went into it."

When Teri Wells was preparing the cookbook, people sent her their memories of the Fairbury Fair.

What the Fairbury Fair means to me…

The following are notes sent to me by people submitting recipes for the cookbook. Over and over people expressed how important the Fair has been to them over the years…. Terri Wells

…Just a note to say what the Fairbury Fair has meant to me and my family. We moved to Fairbury over forty years ago. I had attended the fair in my youth, but since living here I have never missed it except for the birth of my son. The Fairbury Fair has been an occasion for family gatherings and also for friends to stop by. Not growing up on a farm like my husband and I did, our four children always toured the animal barns and even entered our dog, Gretchen, a red Doberman, in the dog show. For a few years, my grandfather, John Edward Beecher from Colfax, visited us during the fair and always attended the horse races. He loved seeing the grandchildren and going to the races. Our children now bring their children to the fair and hopefully our great grandchildren will attend in the future…. Roger and Doris White

…My grandmother sent me the clipping from the Fairbury Blade on the cookbook and thought I would want to send in a recipe. My grandmother is Genevieve Barnes and my parents are Kathy and Gene Barnes. My married name is now Jacquelyn Gillock. I used to enter items in the fair when I was younger. My grandma helped me out a lot with all of that stuff. I won the Jelly Jamboree in 1985. I also won Junior Homemaker as well but I can not remember what year it was… Jacquelyn Barnes Gillock

…My name is Karilyn Newnam, daughter of Wayne and Mildred Newnam. Wayne was the Superintendent of the Agriculture Department for many years. The whole family, plus friends, would help with the display. Fair week was always an exciting time for our family when we were growing up. My cousins would visit our grandparents, Harry and Elsie Newnam, during the fair and my sisters and I would enter baked goods in the competition. Each day involved a trip to the fair to see the horse races, work in the 4-H tent, enjoy the exhibits or just walk around the midway. We helped in the 4-H stand in its first years, before it was a permanent fixture. We were in 4-H when the club decided to have a stand at the fair.

…The Pratt family, Harry and Mabel Pratt, their children, grandchildren and great grand children, have shown livestock at the Fairbury Fair over many years. Harry showed his prize winning roses and Mabel entered flower arrangements, also. The Fairbury Fair was a must activity for our family each summer… Betty Pratt

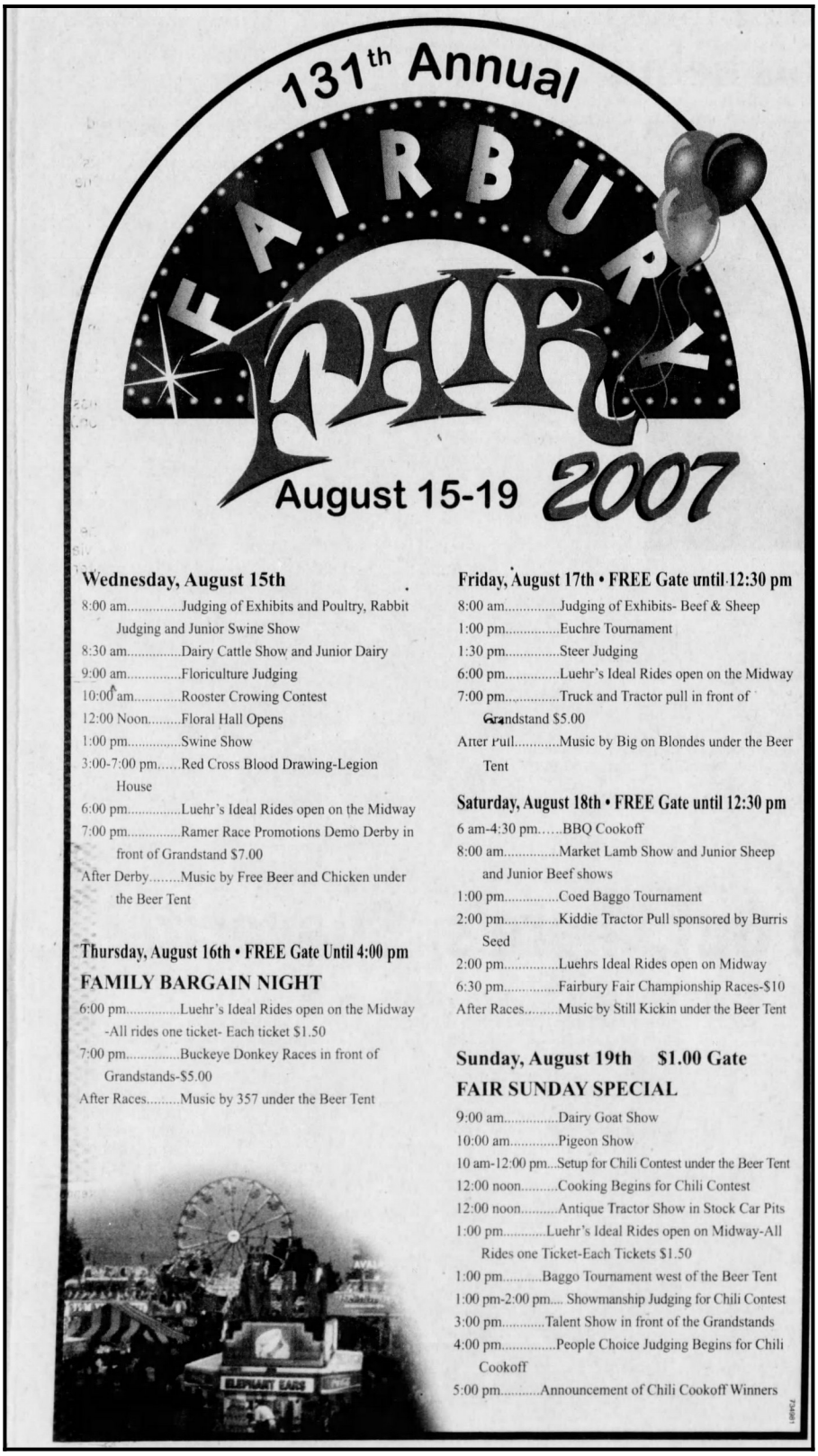
…Tony and I have shown at the Fairbury Fair about 10 years now. We enter around 80 floral entries and 5-10 vegetable entries each year… Frances Witte

…My husband, Bill Freed, and all my family have shown livestock and helped out at the Fairbury Fair for years and years… Delma Freed

…The Fairbury Fair always meant a lot to my husband, Wayne and me. Wayne was the Superintendent in the Agriculture Department, but also helped in other departments for a number of years. As a family, we spent much time at the fair and enjoyed it very much. We always had a season ticket to the Fair and Grandstands. The 4-H stand was also very important to us… Mildred Newnam

2007

The Pantagraph ad for the 2007 Fairbury fair is shown below.


131th Annual
FAIRBURY
FAIR
August 15-19 2007
Wednesday, August 15th
8:00 am.....Judging of Exhibits and Poultry, Rabbit Judging and Junior Swine Show
8:30 am.....Dairy Cattle Show and Junior Dairy
9:00 am.....Floriculture Judging
10:00 am.....Rooster Crowing Contest
12:00 Noon.....Floral Hall Opens
1:00 pm.....Swine Show
3:00-7:00 pm.....Red Cross Blood Drawing-Legion House
6:00 pm.....Luehr's Ideal Rides open on the Midway
7:00 pm.....Ramer Race Promotions Demo Derby in front of Grandstand $7.00
After Derby.....Music by Free Beer and Chicken under the Beer Tent
Thursday, August 16th • FREE Gate Until 4:00 pm
FAMILY BARGAIN NIGHT
6:00 pm.....Luehr's Ideal Rides open on the Midway -All rides one ticket- Each ticket $1.50
7:00 pm.....Buckeye Donkey Races in front of Grandstands-$5.00
After Races.....Music by 357 under the Beer Tent
Friday, August 17th • FREE Gate until 12:30 pm
8:00 am.....Judging of Exhibits- Beef & Sheep
1:00 pm.....Euchre Tournament
1:30 pm.....Steer Judging
6:00 pm.....Luehr's Ideal Rides open on the Midway
7:00 pm.....Truck and Tractor pull in front of Grandstand $5.00
After Pull.....Music by Big on Blondes under the Beer Tent
Saturday, August 18th • FREE Gate until 12:30 pm
6 am-4:30 pm.....BBQ Cookoff
8:00 am.....Market Lamb Show and Junior Sheep and Junior Beef shows
1:00 pm.....Coed Baggo Tournament
2:00 pm.....Kiddie Tractor Pull sponsored by Burris Seed
2:00 pm.....Luehrs Ideal Rides open on Midway
6:30 pm.....Fairbury Fair Championship Races-$10
After Races.....Music by Still Kickin under the Beer Tent
Sunday, August 19th $1.00 Gate
FAIR SUNDAY SPECIAL
9:00 am.....Dairy Goat Show
10:00 am.....Pigeon Show
10 am-12:00 pm...Setup for Chili Contest under the Beer Tent
12:00 noon.....Cooking Begins for Chili Contest
12:00 noon.....Antique Tractor Show in Stock Car Pits
1:00 pm.....Luehr's Ideal Rides open on Midway-All Rides one Ticket-Each Tickets $1.50
1:00 pm.....Baggo Tournament west of the Beer Tent
1:00 pm-2:00 pm.... Showmanship Judging for Chili Contest
3:00 pm.....Talent Show in front of the Grandstands
4:00 pm.....People Choice Judging Begins for Chili Cookoff
5:00 pm.....Announcement of Chili Cookoff Winners
ELEPHANT EARS

2008

The Pantagraph published an ad with all the events at the 2008 Fairbury fair.

Fairbury Fair! August 13 - 17, 2008
For More Info: www.FairburyFair.com
• Luehr's Ideal Rides
• Demolition Derby
• Tractor Pull
• Euchre Tournament
• BBQ Cook Off
• Talent Show
• Stock Car Racing
• Kevin Adair Hypnotist
• Antique Farm Equipment
• Mixed Baggo Tournament
• Rooster Crowing Contest
• Chili Cook Off
• My Little Petting Farm
• Great Little Bear Show Hamm
• Live Music
• Exhibits & Floral Hall
• Master Gun Twirler
• Red Cross Blood Drawing

2009

The Fairbury fair introduced a new event at the 2009 Fairbury fair called "Redneck Olympics" as reported by the Pantagraph.

Fairbury Fair to introduce Redneck Olympics

FAIRBURY — The annual Fairbury Fair has always been a community homecoming celebration of sorts, but this year it also will offer a special place of honor for rednecks.

The 133rd annual Fairbury Fair, set to kick off Wednesday and to continue through Aug. 23, will feature a new event: the Redneck Olympics.

Ten teams of five people each will compete in a series of events, including a tug-of-war and hay stacking, for the distinction of being called "redneck."

The fair will also feature traditional activities, including a cook-off, a demolition derby, a talent show, a karaoke contest, animal judging, a beer tent with music and carnival with rides.

Originally conceived as the Fairbury Union Agricultural Fair in 1876, the event has evolved into a time for people near and far to reconnect with their roots in the Livingston County community, organizers say.

"It's an opportunity for people to come back home, and it's really more like a homecoming," said Fairbury Mayor Robert Walter Jr. "You talk to people from all over the country who have scheduled something in August in order to come back here. It's a chance to see old friends and family members."

The Redneck Olympics and a returning motorcycle stunt team are examples of how fair organizers try to offer something a little different each year while keeping it a family-friendly event, said Jim Schahrer, president of the fair board.

"Time seems to go by so fast, and it seemed like 15 to 20 years ago it was always the same thing year after year," he said. "We try to do something a little different each year."

The fair is one of the biggest volunteer efforts in Fairbury every year, and fairgoers will have a chance to contribute as well by donating blood in lieu of paying the admission fee, Walter said.

“It really is a huge community effort to make this successful,” he said.

2010

The Blade published a story about the history of Luehrs’ Ideal Rides which provided rides to many different Fairbury fairs.

Luehr’s spans three generations of carnival entertainment

The third generation of Luehrs’ presently owns Luehrs’ Ideal Rides. Lorelei and Andy Schoendienst and Jean and Joe Clair purchased Luehrs’ Ideal rides in 1996.

Continuing with the ideals and standards from the generations before them, the Clair, Schoendienst and Atkins families are working hard and striving for excellence.

Luehrs’ Ideal Rides, in its 54th season, has been awarded the Outdoor Amusement Business Association’s “Circle Of Excellence” award for five years. Luehrs’ Ideal Rides is the only carnival in North America to receive four Outdoor Amusement Business Association “Circle Of Excellence” awards in 2007.

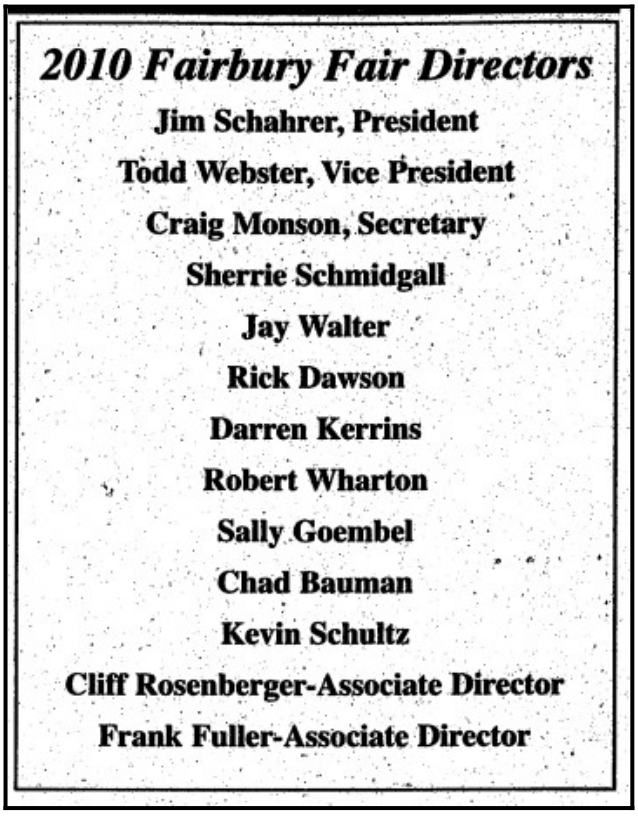
In 2005, Luehrs’ Ideal Rides was awarded their first “Circle Of Excellence” award. This year, Luehrs’ was awarded four awards, one each for their corporate office, rides, games and food.

All of Luehrs’ attractions are operated by employees that are pre-employment drug tested, undergo a national background check and are trained and uniformed. There are two full-time staff members that have received the same training as state inspectors.

At Luehrs Ideal Rides, safety is the number one priority.

Luehrs’ Ideal Rides offers a wide variety of kiddie rides, family rides and adult attractions.

The Blade published the officials in charge of the 2010 Fairbury fair.



The Blade also interviewed Fairbury fair President Jim Schahrer.

From the President....
By Sharon Shifflet
Managing Editor

As the Fairbury Fair enters its 134th run, the success and longevity of the event is due to maintaining the traditions that were set forth by fair boards from years past, according to current Fair Board President Jim Schahrer.

Schahrer, who has been president since 2002, feels that keeping agriculture in the fore front is a must.

"We must remember that the family farm has built our community and made it strong," said Schahrer. "Without an agricultural base, fairs will become festivals and then only memories."

Schahrer said the hard work and dedication of the fair boards both past, present and future is the only way these events will ever continue.

"I am very proud of the efforts of the Fairbury Fair Board. These individuals spend a great amount of time administering both the annual fair as well as the weekly race

program during the summer," said Schahrer. "These folks are very dedicated and receive absolutely no compensation for their countless hours of volunteerism."

Schahrer also complimented all the department superintendents that are also a valuable asset to the fair.

"Without these folks, the fair would not be as it is today," Schahrer said.

"We also cannot forget the local folks that volunteer their time come fair week, to work wherever they can, and local businesses that volunteer the time, talents and financial support - we couldn't do what we do without them. Also, the support and guidance from the American Legion; these guys have been there, done that. You just can't put a price on experience."

Last but not least, according to Schahrer, "We cannot forget our customers. Without fairgoers, whether it be at the gate or in the barn, this is what it is all about."

Regarding how economic conditions could affect the fair, Schahrer said he feels it is really too early to tell how the current economy will effect this year's fair.

"We try very hard to keep expenses in check, and still provide quality entertainment that people will want to see," Schahrer said.

Entry fees for the 2010 fair have not been increased, according to Schahrer, however, due to rising costs associated with the fair, a processing fee per exhibitor was added.

Schahrer said some of the new additions for the 2010 fair are The Balster's Magic Show, which is a free grounds act.

A music show in the grandstands has been added this year. Steve Hall and the Shotgun Red Show from Nashville that attracts audiences of all ages will perform on Friday, Aug. 20 at 7 p.m.

Another new event this year is the 5K run/2K walk on Saturday. A farmer's market has also been scheduled.

Schahrer said that after attending several fairs in the northern one-third of the state, he was very proud of the Fairbury Fair and what it has to offer.

Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

Photographs from the 1990s

Chapter 17

2011 to 2020

2011

The Blade published a story describing the plans for the 2011 Fairbury fair.

> ## Fair time in a week
> **By Sharon Shifflet**
> Managing Editor
>
> It's time to get ready for the 135th annual Fairbury Fair that will get underway Aug. 17 and run through Aug. 21.
>
> Advance ride tickets are currently available (16 tickets for $12) at all Fairbury banks — Bluestem National Bank, Busey Bank, Fairbury-Cropsey Community Bank and First State Bank of Forrest; and at Dave's Supermarket.
>
> Judging of exhibits opens the fair at 8 a.m. on Aug. 17. The long-running rooster crowing contest is on the schedule for 10 a.m. Dairy cattle, swine, poultry, pigeons and rabbit entries will be judged Wednesday.
>
> Floral hall judging will start at 9 a.m. Wednesday and will be open during judging of exhibits. Judging resumes on Friday at 8 a.m. with beef, steers and sheep. The market lamb show is scheduled for Saturday at 8 a.m., and dairy goats will take the show ring at 9 a.m. on Sunday.
>
> Stock car racing at 7 p.m. and carnival rides featuring Luehr's Ideal Rides on the midway, will also highlight Wednesday's lineup.
>
> Thursday is bargain night at the carnival with all rides $1.50 beginning at 6 p.m. The annual fair talent show will be at 7 p.m. on Thursday.
>
> A Euchre tournament will be featured Friday at 1 p.m. and Ramer Racing Demolition Derby at 7 p.m. Also, Friday is Buddy Night for carnival rides — two ride for the price of one, beginning at 6 p.m.
>
> A farmers' market will be available on Saturday beginning at 7 a.m. and the 5K run will also begin at 7 am. A BBQ cook-off at noon, pizza eating contest and stock car racing will also be featured on Saturday. The carnival rides open at 2 p.m. Saturday.

Sunday's activities will feature a chili cook off at noon, baggo tournaments beginning at 1 p.m., an antique farm equipment show at noon and carnival rides at 1 p.m. with all rides $1.50.

2012

The Blade published a story describing the 2012 Fairbury fair.

The 136th annual Fairbury Fair starts Wednesday, Aug. 15 and will run through Aug. 19.

Judging of exhibits opens the fair at 8 a.m. on Wednesday. The rooster crowing contest is on the schedule for 10 a.m. Sign-up for the contest begins at 9 a.m. If less than five roosters are entered, the contest will be canceled. Dairy cattle, swine, poultry, pigeons and rabbit entries will be judged Wednesday.

Floral hall judging will start at 9 a.m. Wednesday. Floral hall will be open during judging of exhibits. Judging resumes on Friday at 8 a.m. with beef, steers and sheep. The market lamb show is scheduled for Saturday at 8 a.m., and dairy goats will take the show ring at 9 a.m. on Sunday.

A bloodmobile will be held from 3 to 7 p.m. Wednesday in the American Legion Building, at the east end of the fairgrounds. Stock car racing at 7 p.m. and carnival rides featuring Luehr's Ideal Rides on the midway, and a DJ in the beer tent will also highlight the lineup on Wednesday.

Thursday is bargain night at the carnival with all rides $1.50 beginning at 6 p.m. The annual fair talent show will be at 7 p.m. on Thursday.

A Euchre tournament will be featured Friday at 1 p.m. and Ramer Racing Demolition Derby at 7 p.m. Also, Friday is Buddy Night for carnival rides — two ride for the price of one, beginning at 6 p.m. Back Pages will perform in the beer tent.

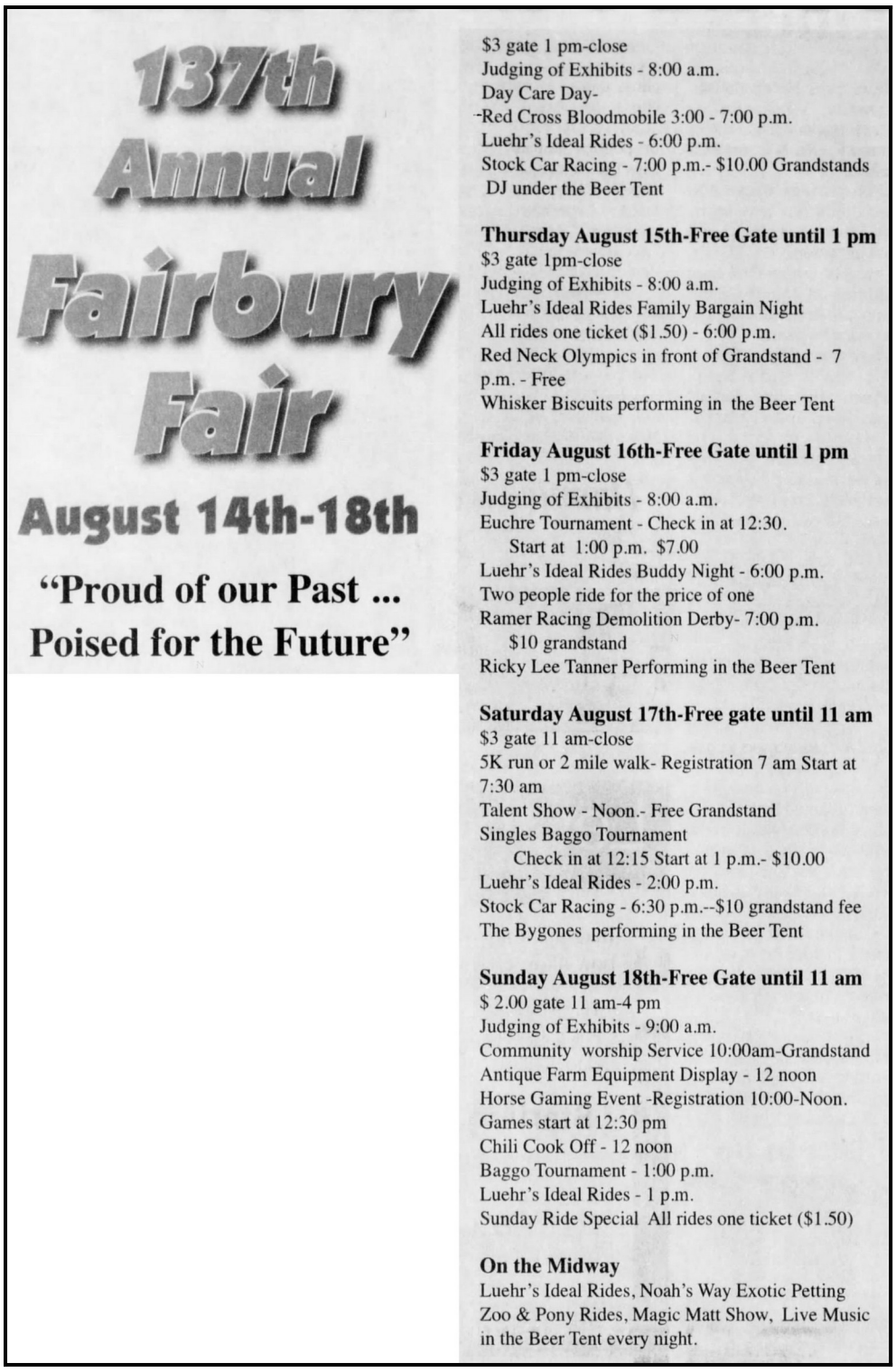
A 5K run will begin at 7:30 a.m. with registration at 7 a.m., and stock car racing will also be featured on Saturday. The carnival rides open at 2 p.m. Saturday. Big on Blondes will perform in the beer tent.

Sunday's activities will feature a community worship service at 10 a.m., chili cook off at noon, baggo tournaments beginning at 1 p.m., an antique farm equipment show at noon and a NITPA mini-rod/antique tractor pull with free grandstand. Carnival rides open at 1 p.m. with all rides $1.50.

Throughout the five-day run, the fair will feature several attractions on the midway, including Noah's Way Exotic Petting Zoo and Pony Rides and the Balster Magic Show.

2013

The Pantagraph published the following ad for the 2013 Fairbury fair.



137th Annual Fairbury Fair

August 14th-18th

"Proud of our Past ... Poised for the Future"

$3 gate 1 pm-close
Judging of Exhibits - 8:00 a.m.
Day Care Day-
-Red Cross Bloodmobile 3:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 6:00 p.m.
Stock Car Racing - 7:00 p.m.- $10.00 Grandstands
DJ under the Beer Tent

Thursday August 15th-Free Gate until 1 pm
$3 gate 1pm-close
Judging of Exhibits - 8:00 a.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides Family Bargain Night
All rides one ticket ($1.50) - 6:00 p.m.
Red Neck Olympics in front of Grandstand - 7 p.m. - Free
Whisker Biscuits performing in the Beer Tent

Friday August 16th-Free Gate until 1 pm
$3 gate 1 pm-close
Judging of Exhibits - 8:00 a.m.
Euchre Tournament - Check in at 12:30.
Start at 1:00 p.m. $7.00
Luehr's Ideal Rides Buddy Night - 6:00 p.m.
Two people ride for the price of one
Ramer Racing Demolition Derby- 7:00 p.m.
$10 grandstand
Ricky Lee Tanner Performing in the Beer Tent

Saturday August 17th-Free gate until 11 am
$3 gate 11 am-close
5K run or 2 mile walk- Registration 7 am Start at 7:30 am
Talent Show - Noon.- Free Grandstand
Singles Baggo Tournament
Check in at 12:15 Start at 1 p.m.- $10.00
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 2:00 p.m.
Stock Car Racing - 6:30 p.m.--$10 grandstand fee
The Bygones performing in the Beer Tent

Sunday August 18th-Free Gate until 11 am
$ 2.00 gate 11 am-4 pm
Judging of Exhibits - 9:00 a.m.
Community worship Service 10:00am-Grandstand
Antique Farm Equipment Display - 12 noon
Horse Gaming Event -Registration 10:00-Noon.
Games start at 12:30 pm
Chili Cook Off - 12 noon
Baggo Tournament - 1:00 p.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 1 p.m.
Sunday Ride Special All rides one ticket ($1.50)

On the Midway
Luehr's Ideal Rides, Noah's Way Exotic Petting Zoo & Pony Rides, Magic Matt Show, Live Music in the Beer Tent every night.

Tragedy struck the Fairbury fair on July 19, 2013. Fair Board President Jim Schahrer passed away at the age of 52.

Jim Schahrer (1961-2013).

2014

Kent Casson wrote a story for the Blade about the 2014 Fairbury fair.

> **Volunteers keep fair going strong**
>
> By Kent Casson
> Blade Correspondent
>
> The Fairbury Fair may only last five days, but the behind-the-scenes work happens throughout the year.
>
> Fair board president Leroy Rodriguez appreciates the hard work put in by volunteers day in and day out to make the annual event a success.

> “Actually, we start working on the Fairbury Fair after we get done this year,” Rodriguez said during the fair’s opening day Wednesday. “We go down to Springfield and we take a lot of time and even a lot of hours. I want to thank everybody for that.”
>
> Arthur Moser of Fairbury was a winner at the fair’s dairy show on Wednesday morning. He said it felt pretty good to receive a blue ribbon.
>
> “There are pretty nice cows out here – we just luckily had the better one, I guess.”
>
> The 17-year-old is now done showing for the year.
>
> The Fairbury Fair included two nights of stock car racing, redneck Olympics, a 5K run, and a new kid’s bags tournament.
>
> Sunday highlights included an antique tractor display followed by horse games near the grandstand. Also, the fair held a Disney ticket drawing where children’s names could be entered to win a Disney trip at the main gate each day.

For many years, the Fairbury Fair Board has attended the annual Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs convention held each February. They go to this statewide meeting to attend training sessions, learn about new regulations, book entertainment and carnival providers, and exchange ideas with other fairs so they can improve future Fairbury Fairs.

Pee Wee Showmanship

The Kilgus kiddies, Kamber 7, Collin 4, and Kelsey 20 months, walk around the show ring with their blue ribbons from the pee wee dairy showmanship at the Fairbury Fair on Wednesday. The dairy show ring is a familiar place for the Kilgus family, going back several generations. See more fair photos on Page B10.

SHARON SHIFFLET/THE BLADE

2015

The Blade published the schedule for the 2015 Fairbury fair.

2015 Fairbury Fair Schedule

Wednesday August 19th – Free Gate until 1 pm
$3 gate 3 pm–close
Judging of Exhibits – 8:00 a.m.
Day Care Day – 10:00 am
Luehr's Ideal Rides – 6:00 p.m.
The Willis Clan – 7:00 p.m. – Adults $10.00 12 & under $5.00 – Grandstands
DJ Kent Blunier under the Beer Tent 8 pm–11 am

Thursday August 20th – Free Gate until 1 pm
$3 gate 3 pm–close

Judging of Exhibits – 8:00 a.m.
Red Cross Bloodmobile 3:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides Family Bargain Night
All rides one ticket ($1.50) – 6:00 p.m.
Meat Goat Show – Registration 5:30 pm Show at 7 pm
Northern Illinois Tractor Puller Association in front of Grandstand – 7 p.m. – Free
Twitter Bug performing in the Beer Tent 7 pm–11 pm

Friday August 21st – Free Gate until 1 pm
$3 gate 1 pm–close
Judging of Exhibits – 8:00 a.m.
Euchre Tournament – Check in at 12:30. Start at 1:00 p.m. $7.00
Luehr's Ideal Rides Buddy Night – 6:00 p.m.
Two people ride for the price of one
Ramer Racing Demolition Derby – 7:00 p.m. – $10 grandstand
Breaking Storm Performing in the Beer Tent 8 pm–12 am

Saturday August 22nd – Free gate until 11 am
$3 gate 11 am–close
5K Run or 2 mile walk – Registration 6:45 am Start at 8:00 am
Talent Show – Noon. – Free Grandstand
Winner of the "It's a Jungle out There" Photo contest announced at the end of the Talent Show.
Kids Baggo Tournament – Check in at 12:15 Start at 1 pm – Free Entry
Luehr's Ideal Rides – 2:00 p.m.
Stock Car Racing – 6:30 p.m. – $10 grandstand fee
Jury's Out performing in the Beer Tent 8 pm–12 am

Sunday August 23rd – Free Gate until 11 am
$2 gate 11 am–4 pm
Flea Market 8 am–2 pm
Community worship Service 10:00 am – Grandstand
Antique Farm Equipment Display – 12 noon
Horse Gaming Event – Registration 10:00–Noon. Games start at 12:30 pm
Chili Cook Off – 12 noon
Baggo Tournament – 1:00 p.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides – 1 p.m.
Sunday Ride Special All rides one ticket ($1.50)

Music under the Beer tent by: Breann & Tommy Neal

Children's Drawing (12 & Under) @ 3 pm – Grandstands

Contestants wave to the crowd following the annual talent show held on Saturday night during the Fairbury Fair. Fairbury Blade photo.

The Blade also published a photo of the Directors of the 2015 Fairbury fair.

The Fairbury Board of Directors took time from their busy schedule at the fair for a photo. Directors Leroy Rodriguez, President, Sally Goembel, Vice President, Kimberly Peterson, Secretary, Robert Wharton, Craig Monson, Darren Kerrins, Cliff Rosenberger, Frank Fuller, Kay Shiflett, Chris Tribley, Dave Shepherd, Jeremy Ray – Associate Director, and Brian Dunn – Associate Director. Not Present, Gerry Brandt.

2016

Kent Casson wrote a Blade article about changes planned for the 2016 Fairbury fair. One of the major changes was the replacement of the 100 year-old restrooms on the fairgrounds.

The Fairbury Fair is getting back to its roots this year.

"Agriculture…Our Heritage" is the theme for the 140th annual event Aug. 17–21 at the fairgrounds on the south end of town. The ladies of Floral Hall came up with the theme to pay tribute to the industry which started it all.

"We're taking a step back and this is what we are in Fairbury – we're all agricultural," explained fair manager Sally Goembel.

The local FFA chapter is even getting involved as members from Prairie Central will help staff an agriculture exhibit area with fun information and activities.

Entertainment will be plentiful during the five-day celebration. A Johnny and June Cash tribute band known as "One More Round" will perform Wednesday at 7 p.m. with a $5 grandstand entry. Country rock band Brushville plays Thursday evening with up and coming country singer Caroline Kole headlining the night. Jury's Out performs Saturday and Jawbone Stew will play during the baggo tournament Sunday.

"We love having entertainment for all the people on our grounds to enjoy," said fair president Leroy Rodriguez.

The Cincinnati Circus will be the main midway act featuring a big tent with three locations on the fairgrounds including different activities.

"They're going to pretty much fill our whole midway for us this year," Goembel said.

Luehr's Ideal Rides return to the fair with some new rides this year such as a hang glider and different slide. A third new ride is also expected, according to Goembel.

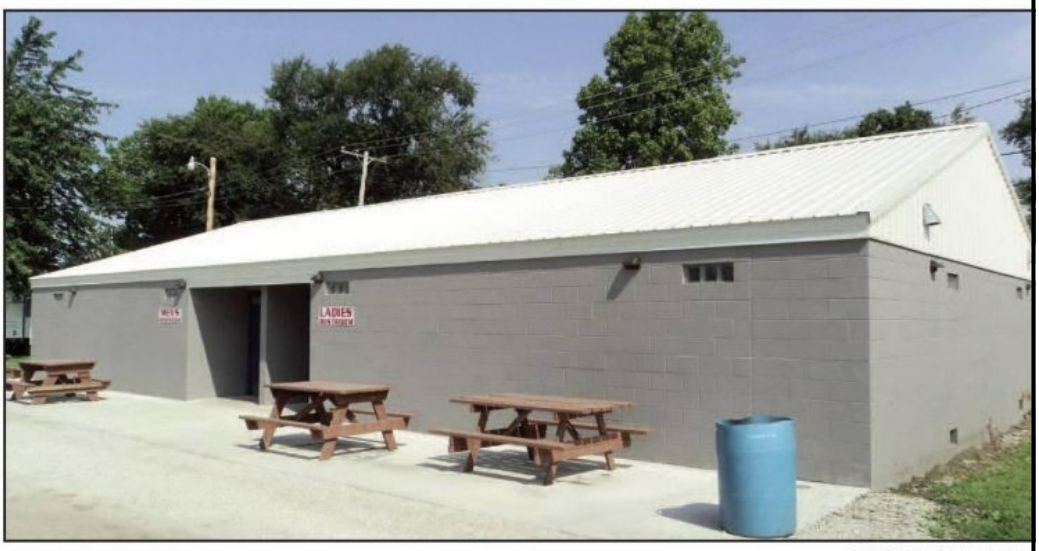
Fair visitors will notice brand new restrooms, which replaced ones that were close to 100 years old. The restrooms have doubled in size and even have showers. Last fall's weather allowed volunteers to begin the work.

"East of our grandstand, we tore down the old wood bleachers and replaced them with brand new aluminum and increased our seating for shows by almost 600 seats," stated Goembel.

Goembel and Rodriguez appreciate Bank of Pontiac stepping up to finance the project over the next handful of years. Plans to consider the number of volunteers helping out "amazing."

"I would like to thank all of our sponsors and all the people that come out to support the Fairbury Fair and the American Legion Speedway. Without those people, we would never exist any longer," added Rodriguez.

Aug. 20 will be a busy day with the 5K run or two-mile walk. Registration is at 6:45 a.m. with the event starting at 8. Also, the winner of the "Agriculture…Our Heritage" photo contest is announced at 1 p.m. Sunday's community worship service, antique farm equipment display and chili cook off are also popular among fairgoers.



PHOTOS BY KENT CASSON

New north side restroom. A new restroom was also built on the south side of the track.

The Blade also published the schedule for the 2016 Fairbury fair.

Wednesday August 17th-
Free Gate until 3 p.m.
$3 gate 3 p.m. - close
Red Cross Bloodmobile 3:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Rooster Crowing Contest - 10:00 a.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 6:00 p.m.
One More Round-A Johnny Cash/June Carter Tribute
7:00 p.m.- Adults $5.00 12 & under Free-Grandstands
DJ Mounce under the Beer Tent 7p.m.-11a.m.
Thursday August 18th-
Free Gate until 3 p.m.
$3 gate 3 p.m. - close
Day Care Day - 10:00 a.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides Family Bargain Night
All rides one ticket ($1.50) - 6:00 p.m.
Meat Goat Show-Registration 5:30 p.m. Show at 7 p.m.
6:30 Brushville - 8:00
Caroline Kole $10 - Grandstand
DJ Mounce in the Beer Tent 7 p.m.-11 p.m.
Friday August 19th-
Free Gate until 3 p.m.
$3 gate 3 p.m. - close
Euchre Tournament -
Check in at 12:30. Start at 1:00 p.m. $7.00
Luehr's Ideal Rides Buddy Night - 6:00 p.m.
Two people ride for the price of one
Ramer Racing Demolition Derby- 7:00 p.m.-$10 grandstand
The NATU Band Performing in the Beer Tent 8 p.m.-12 a.m.
Saturday August 20th-
Free gate until 11 a.m.
$3 gate 11 a.m.-close
5K run or 2 mile walk-
Registration 6:45 a.m. Start at 8:00 a.m.
Winner of the "Agriculture...Our Heritage"
Photo contest announced 1 p.m.
Kids Baggo Tournament -
Check in at 12:15 Start at 1 p.m.- Free Entry
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 2:00 p.m.
Stock Car Racing - 6:30 p.m.--$10 grandstand fee
Jury's Out performing in the Beer Tent 8 p.m.-12 a.m.
Sunday August 21st-
Free Gate until 11 a.m.
$ 3.00 gate 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Community worship Service 10:00 a.m.-Grandstand
Antique Farm Equipment Display - 12 noon
Chili Cook Off - 12 noon
Baggo Tournament -
Check in at 12:15 Start at 1:00 p.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 1 p.m.
Sunday Ride Special All rides one ticket ($1.50)
Music under the Beer tent by : Jawbone Stew
Children's Drawing (12 & Under) @ 3 p.m. - Grandstands
On the Midway
Luehr's Ideal Rides,
Rob Thompson (Fri-Sun),
Cincinnati Circus Company,
FFA Agriculture Tent
CHILDREN'S SCHEDULE
Wednesday August 17th
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 6:00 p.m.
Thursday August 18th
Luehr's Ideal Rides Family Bargain Night
All rides one ticket ($1.50) - 6:00 p.m.
Friday August 19th
Luehr's Ideal Rides Buddy Night - 6:00 p.m.
Two people ride for the price of one
Saturday August 20th
Winner of the "Agriculture... Our Heritage"
Photo contest announced at 1p.m.
Kids Baggo Tournament Check in at 12:15
Start at 1 p.m.- Free Entry
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 2:00 p.m.
Sunday August 21st
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 1 p.m.
Sunday Ride Special All rides one ticket ($1.50)
Children's Drawing (12 & Under) @ 3 p.m. - Grandstands
On the Midway
Luehr's Ideal Rides, Rob Thompson (Fri-Sun),
Cincinnati Circus Company, FFA Agriculture Tent
2016
FAIRBURY
FAIR
SCHEDULE
140th
ANNUAL
FAIRBURY FAIR
August 17th-21st,
2016
"Agriculture.....
Our Heritage"

2017

Kent Casson wrote a Blade article about the 2017 Fairbury fair.

> **Fair's theme is "SMALL TOWN USA!!"**
>
> By Kent Casson
> For The Blade
>
> Fairbury Fair Manager Sally Goembel remembers attending the fair when she was a child and wants those memories to live on.
>
> "I want other children to remember it just the same," Goembel said.
>
> During the past few years, Goembel and others on the Fairbury Fair board decided to focus more on the children attending the annual five-day event on the south end of town. This year's fair theme is "Small Town U.S.A." which fits in nicely with the idea.

The perfect example of the family-friendly atmosphere is a free gate all day on opening day. The Martin Family Circus singing group performs that night with free grandstand admission. The group includes a mom, dad and four children.

“The dad was the lead singer from the group Exile. The mom is the daughter of Duane Allen who was in the Oak Ridge Boys,” explained Goembel.

The Martin Family Circus has a strong following and they are working on a CD. Fair organizers were impressed when they saw the group perform which was why they decided to bring them to Fairbury. Also, a kids drawing on Sunday for those 12 and under will feature six bicycles, hover boards and other prizes. Goembel said the community has really pitched in with donations.

Wood carvers will return to the fair this year on Friday, Saturday and Sunday with the Bear Hollow Wood Carvers on the midway.

“On Sunday, there will be an auction of the stuff they carved during the week,” stated Goembel.

Saturday and Sunday are expected to be the busiest days of the fair with the 5K run or two mile walk, kid baggo tournament and a free Saturday night performance from the Indigos under the beer tent from 8 p.m. to midnight. The Funk band provides an energetic show with some popular songs thrown in.

“We got to see them perform down in Springfield this year and immediately were impressed with them,” said Goembel. “I encourage everyone to come out and see that show.”

Race fans will not be disappointed during the fair as there will be two nights of racing on Thursday and Saturday. Racing starts at 6 p.m. Thursday with late models, modifieds and crates. The races start at 5:30 p.m. Saturday.

The Blade also published the schedule for the 2017 Fairbury fair.

Wednesday August 16th-
Free Gate ALL DAY
Red Cross Bloodmobile 3:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Rooster Crowing Contest - 10:00 a.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 6:00 p.m.
DJ under the Beer Tent 7 p.m. - 11 p.m.
Thursday August 17th-
Free Gate until 3 p.m.
$3 gate 3 p.m. - close
Day Care Day - 10:00 a.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides Family Bargain Night
All rides one ticket ($1.50) - 6:00 p.m.
Meat Goat Show-Registration 5:30 p.m. Show at 7 p.m.
6:00 pm Racing
UMP Late Models, UMP Modifieds and UMP Pro (Crate) Late Models
Racing $10 - Grandstand
DJ in the Beer Tent 7 p.m.-11 p.m.
Friday August 18th-
Free Gate until 3 p.m.
$3 gate 3 p.m. - close
Euchre Tournament -
Check in at 12:30. Start at 1:00 p.m. $7.00
Luehr's Ideal Rides Buddy Night - 6:00 p.m.
Two people ride for the price of one
Ramer Racing Demolition Derby - 7:00 p.m.- $10 grandstand
Jury's Out Performing in the Beer Tent 8 p.m. - 12 a.m.
Saturday August 19th-
Free gate until 11 a.m.
$3 gate 11 a.m.-close
5K run or 2 mile walk-
Registration 6:45 a.m. Start at 8:00 a.m.
Kids Baggo Tournament -
Check in at 12:15 Start at 1 p.m.- Free Entry
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 2:00 p.m.
Stock Car Racing - 5:30 p.m. - $10 grandstand fee
The Indigos performing in the Beer Tent 8 p.m.-12 a.m.
Sunday August 20th-
Free Gate until 11 a.m.
$ 3.00 gate 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Community worship Service 10:00 a.m. - Grandstand
Antique Farm Equipment Display - 12 noon
Chili Cook Off - 12 noon
Baggo Tournament -
Check in at 12:15 Start at 1:00 p.m.
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 1 p.m.
Sunday Ride Special All rides one ticket ($1.50)
Music under the Beer tent by: Eric Burgett on Piano 1-5
Children's Drawing (12 & Under)
@ 3 p.m. - Grandstands
On the Midway
Luehr's Ideal Rides,
Rob Thompson (Fri-Sun)
Cincinnati Circus Company
Bear Hollow Wood Carvers
CHILDREN'S SCHEDULE
Wednesday August 17th
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 6:00 p.m.
Thursday August 18th
Luehr's Ideal Rides Family Bargain Night
All rides one ticket ($1.50) - 6:00 p.m.
Friday August 19th
Luehr's Ideal Rides Buddy Night - 6:00 p.m.
Two people ride for the price of one
Saturday August 20th
Kids Baggo Tournament Check in at 12:15
Start at 1 p.m.- Free Entry
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 2:00 p.m.
Sunday August 21st
Luehr's Ideal Rides - 1 p.m.
Sunday Ride Special All rides one ticket ($1.50)
Children's Drawing (12 & Under) @ 3 p.m. - Grandstands
On the Midway
Luehr's Ideal Rides, Rob Thompson (Fri-Sun),
Cincinnati Circus Company, Bear Hollow Wood Carvers
2017
FAIRBURY
FAIR
SCHEDULE
141st
ANNUAL
FAIRBURY FAIR
August 16-20th
2017
"Small Town USA!"

2018

Kent Casson wrote a Blade article about the 2018 Fairbury fair.

> **This year's fair features many new activities**
>
> A game featuring large plastic balls, expanded children's giveaway's and daily shuttle services are among the new features planned for this year's Fairbury Fair.
>
> Fairgoers can enjoy "Knockerball Max" which includes plastic balls in a large area where individuals try to knock each other off of a field. The game can be played as teams or singles.
>
> "We are looking forward to a really good time with that," admits Fairbury Fair manager and vice-president Sally Goembel.
>
> The kid raffle, which had been held on Sunday afternoons in the past, is being split between two days this year. A drawing for those between the ages of 8 and 12 will take

place Wednesday at 7 p.m. with one for any child through age 7 being held on Sunday. Both events will be held in the grandstand.

Should you need help navigating the fairgrounds, a daily shuttle service will be offered throughout the five days. All of the fair golf carts have seats so any fair board member can help get you where you need to go if you inquire at the office.

Daily attractions for kids include a Kids Baggo game which allows children to win assorted wood games who are returning for the second year in a row.

“We’ll have two car shows by the end of the fair and they will all be open for silent auction bids. Sunday will be the day that we let the public know if they won the carvings,” said Goembel. “We are in a petting zoo complete with pony rides and exotic animals will advertise it on the big striped tent and the tank makes a return.

“We are putting as many drivers in there, people can see a great crowd,” the mayor commented.

There will be non-designated music Wednesday and Thursday nights in the grandstand. The beer tent will feature a DJ Wednesday night, solo acoustic act on Thursday and the popular band Jury’s Out on Friday.

“We have (Jury’s Out) about every year because he does a fantastic job and brings in a great crowd,” explained fair board president Leroy Rodriguez.

The Indigos return for a Saturday night performance – something Rodriguez refers to as “entertaining and uplifting.” Jawbone Stew will entertain participants of the chili cook-off and baggo tournament on Sunday.

Other fair highlights include the Red Cross Bloodmobile Wednesday from 2:30–6:30 p.m., euchre tournament on Friday afternoon, kids baggo tournament on Saturday, and the Fairbury Fair 5K run or two-mile walk Saturday morning with registration at 6:45 a.m. and 8 a.m. start.

The Blade also published a neat photo of the fairgrounds.

In November of 2018, the Pantagraph reported that Matt Curl had bought the Fairbury Fair and speedway per the article below.

Curl 'thrilled' to purchase Fairbury track

New owner: Little will change at American Legion Speedway

FAIRBURY – There will be few changes under new ownership of the Fairbury American Legion Speedway (FALS), said its new owner, Matt Curl of Fairbury.

Last week, Curl finalized a deal with Fairbury's American Legion John Joda Post #54 to purchase a majority share of the quarter-mile dirt oval.

"I couldn't be more thrilled to have this chance to run a racetrack that means the world to me," Curl, 42, said. "It was simply an opportunity that I couldn't pass up."

Curl said he grew up attending races at the track, worked as a race-day official in various capacities and served as FALS's race director from the fall of 2012 until the end of the 2017 season. He left to become the series director of the World of Outlaws Craftsman Late Model Series in 2018, but will leave that position.

“I felt like I could be in that job for the rest of my career if it wasn’t for the one thing that excited me more — purchasing and promoting my hometown track,” he said, adding that he believes the track is one of the best in the country.

Details of the sale of the 34 acres were not released except that the legion will remain a minority shareholder in the new ownership and the track’s name will not change. The legion will continue to center scholarship, veteran and member outreach programs through the speedway, Curl said.

“It’s not that it was being run under bad management or anything, but it will be run more as a business because we won’t have that not-for-profit handle that the legion had,” he said. “But the citizens of Fairbury and surrounding areas have been great for a number of years and we know that will continue.”

The legion has owned the track for 81 years. Gerry Brandt, commander of American Legion John Joda Post #54, could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

The Fairbury Fair will continue to operate on the grounds, and will be better than ever, Curl said. However, there will be some changes to the Fairbury Fair Corporation, he added.

“The fair board is in transitional stage to be their own corporation now and pulling out of the racetrack business,” he said. “That prompted more of a transformation of the board members into their new positions. Their positions are changing, but the corporation is still intact.

“There will be a fair next year and it will be better than ever and”

It’s not like everyone on the board was fired. It’s in a transition.”

Curl said he is looking forward to a new year of racing next season. The track can hold up to 6,600 people.

“I’ve lived in Fairbury and been around the speedway all of my life, so I know the sponsors, know the people and know our community,” he said. “We will be using the same people and everything will be very similar to what people have known in the past.”

Curl plans to continue FALS’s weekly Saturday night racing programs in 2019 with DIRTcar-sanctioned Super Late Models and UMP Modifieds headlining the action. He will release a full schedule and other 2019 details later, but expects to open the campaign in mid-April.

He already has the 30th annual edition of the wildly popular World of Outlaws-sanctioned Prairie Dirt Classic scheduled for July 26 and 27 with the 100-lapper's first-place prize currently sitting at $30,000.

The Fairbury American Legion Post 54 retained ownership and oversight of the Fairbury Fair Corporation. Due to American Legion National constraints, the speedway had to drop "American Legion" from its name.

Aerial photo of 2024 Prairie Dirt Classic. Photo courtesy of Ryan Bachtold. In recent years, over 7,000 people visit Fairbury for this race.

2019

Kent Casson wrote an article about changes in the food building at the fairgrounds.

Favorite foods rejoin fair

By Kent Casson

If you've been missing those brownie sundaes and pork burgers from the Fairbury Fair 4-H food stand in recent years, you're in luck.

The Fairbury Prairie Farmers 4-H Club will once again be serving these favorites along with some new items at this year's fair. The former Rebekah Lodge food stand building has been completely remodeled and enclosed for a comfortable fair dining experience – complete with air conditioning and a new kitchen area.

"It is looking fabulous," club leader Angie Kratochvil said. "We are so excited that we have a great space that will be air conditioned and set up very similar to how we operated our food stand in the past."

U-shape seating will allow customers to sit around the edge of the dining space while 4-H members serve them food. This also serves as a great learning experience for the young people involved while raising funds for the organization to use for various activities throughout the year.

As the fair transitioned to a new board of directors, the club found out they were interested in having the 4-H food stand back and the Prairie Farmers were excited about the possibility. The club last operated a stand at the fair back in 2015 in a different building which is no longer there. A discussion among club families resulted in a yes vote to return to the fair.

"This will be a great amount of money to provide our whole year of activities," Kratochvil said. "This will also get our kids interacting with the community and visitors who they will be able to serve in. I hope fairgoers all come and check out the new building," said Kratochvil.

Kratochvil feels the visitors will enjoy the farm-style atmosphere inside, which fits in nicely with the farm life of club members who care for their animals, among other things.

Menu items will include traditional favorites such as hot dogs, pork burgers and pies along with the addition of pulled pork this year courtesy of Blunier Farms. Pulled pork nachos will be a dining option along with regular nachos, chips, tea, lemonade and Pepsi products.

"What will be a big decision to make when visiting the food stand: enjoy Texas cake all by itself or add in ice cream and chocolate syrup for a truly sweet fair experience?" Kratochvil said.

A view of the dining area inside the newly-remodeled food stand at the Fairbury Fair. KENT CASSON/THE BLADE

Kent wrote another Blade article about the 2019 Fairbury fair.

A 2019 fair preview

By Kent Casson

The 143rd Fairbury Fair promises to honor long-standing traditions and showcase new ideas during its five-day run Aug. 14–18.

“For every (board) member that helped out here in the past, we are just carrying on that tradition,” said fair secretary Chris Matich.

The new 4-H food stand building is a must see. This newly remodeled air-conditioned facility will house members of the Fairbury Prairie Farmers 4-H Club who will be serving up tasty traditions along with new favorites. The fair reached an agreement with property owner Matt Curl to redo the former Rebekah Lodge food stand, which includes a brand new kitchen area. Diner 24 will also be serving a few meals from the building.

This year’s fair also features a car raffle for a 2019 Chevy Malibu. Ticket sales have been going well, according to Matich, and tickets will be sold throughout the week with a winner drawn the final day of the fair.

“We’ll have 25 qualifiers, they’ll pick out a key, press the button and if they win they get the chance of taking the car or $10,000 in cash,” Matich explained.

A performance from country star Jo Dee Messina is the entertainment highlight for opening night at the grandstand. Matich said ticket sales are going well and are still available.

The national POWRi midget series racing has been added to Thursday's events along with modifieds and late models for a quick night of racing.

The fair includes plenty of judging as usual with entries ranging from floral and horticulture to animals like rabbits, pigs, dairy and beef. The fair secretaries have received more entries this year as the fair times out nicely with the Illinois State Fair in Springfield. Luehr's Ideal Rides return to the midway with plenty of attractions.

Visitors to the fair can also enjoy wood carvers, magicians, a petting zoo and daily pig races with animals coming from Florida. The popular Ramer Racing demolition derby returns Friday night.

"That is always a huge hit," admits Matich.

Saturday includes the 5K run in the morning with FALS Cup racing at night. Sunday is a big day along with a worship service, chili cook-off and the return of the talent show following a hiatus. The Schahrer family is organizing the show putting plenty of effort into it for kids and teachers.

"Every fair board before us did the same thing and the ones that are involved with this really know what it takes to put this fair on, or any county fair for that matter," Matich added.

Matich said the fair organizers want to follow in the footsteps of previous boards, move forward and make sure the fair is viable for a long time.

2020

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic started to spread throughout the world quickly. Ordinary life was shut down in the United States for several months as citizens remained isolated in their homes. However, by the summer months, businesses and institutions gradually started a slow reopening process.

Because of the pandemic virus, all outdoor events with large numbers of attendees were canceled to minimize the spread of the virus. After much research, the Fairbury Fair organizers decided to cancel the fair and resume it in 2021.

Chapter 18

2021 to 2026

2021

Kent Casson wrote a Blade article about the 2021 Fairbury fair.

Plenty of excitement to be had at Fairbury Fair

After a year away, the Fairbury Fair returns with the theme "Fishing for Fun at the Fairbury Fair" for the 145th event.

Organizers are excited about this year's edition of the Fairbury Fair, which runs Aug. 18–22. Visitors to the swine building will notice all new pens in a cleaned-up area and floral hall returns with new LED lighting.

"That will be a really nice addition," said Gunner Sullivan, Fairbury Fair Board president. "Each year we are trying to make improvements."

Axe throwing has been around longer than the fair but it's popularity had dropped. It's coming back in popularity, so it's only appropriate the reborn fad is going to be part of the fair activities. Participants throw into a cage in an open car trailer.

Another new highlight will be a barbecue cook off, sanctioned by a leading organization. The Kansas City Barbecue Society event, featuring ribs and chicken, is limited to 20 teams. The payout is $1,700 to the winner, along with a Big Green Egg smoker.

"The judging is very secret so nobody knows who cooked anything," Sullivan said.

The talent show has been moved to Thursday night at 5 p.m. featuring family musical entertainment by Johnathan Len, as well. Luehr's Ideal Rides one-ticket-ride night will be taking place and rock band Protégé will be performing.

"Everything on Thursday night is free," Sullivan said.

Military Day is planned for Saturday with a brass band performance and activities under a tent. A special grandstand event is planned to welcome those home who weren't welcomed home before.

Golf cart enthusiasts won't be disappointed as a golf cart scavenger hunt and golf cart rodeo will take place around town. A golf cart raffle is also underway where the person selling the winning ticket gets $500. The fair will use that money for improvements and overhead costs.

Country superstars Diamond Rio is scheduled to perform in front of the grandstand tonight at 8, with popular regional band Brushville opening up with a 6:30 p.m. start. The stands open at 5 p.m.

Rock fans will want to flock to the fair Friday for the Heart to Heartbreakers tribute band rock show at 7 p.m., along with the Ozzy Osborne tribute known as Crazy Babies. AC/DC tribute band will also perform. The band Rolling Thunder plays in the beer garden Friday from 9–11 p.m.

"The wood carver is coming back — he's very entertaining," added Sullivan.

Members of Prairie Farmers 4-H and parents will once again be serving up goodies at the club's food stand in the former Odd Fellows area. The stand was completely rebuilt in 2019.

"They had a great fair in 2019. They are coming back this year and we are looking forward to that," Sullivan said.

If you are craving an early morning breakfast, the Ladies Auxiliary will serve breakfast each morning starting around 6 a.m.

Saturday is full of activities like the 5K run and 2-mile walk, kids' baggo tournament, a DJ and stock car racing. Johnny McGuire with opening act Eric Chesser perform in the beer garden from 9 p.m. to midnight.

Sunday includes the community worship service, kids drawing, antique farm equipment display, chili cook off, baggo tournament, wood carving silent auction and the demolition derby near the grandstand.

2022

After being in business for more than 100 years, the Fairbury Blade newspaper ceased publication at the end of 2021. Therefore, there is no coverage of the 2022 Fairbury fair in the Blade.

Many years ago, the Fairbury Fair Board placed ads in the Bloomington Pantagraph newspaper. With the decline in the number of people reading newspapers and the high cost of placing advertisements, the Fairbury Fair Board quit placing ads in the Pantagraph in the 2010s decade.

Kent Casson published a story on FairburyNews.net about the 2022 Fairbury Fair. John Michael Montgomery was the featured performer.

Rain didn't stop the annual Fairbury Fair talent show from taking place Saturday morning, although the planned Veterans activities were canceled.

Entries ranged from dancing and singing to gymnastics and a science experiment at the show held inside the fair beer tent since the grandstand area was too wet.

Addison Lewis of Hoopeston won first place in the senior division for a vocal solo of the song, "Homecoming Queen" and advances to represent Fairbury at the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs convention in Springfield over the winter. Cora Morris

of Fairbury received second in the senior division for her vocal solo of “Both Sides Now.”

In the junior 11-14 division, Chaylea Fisher of Colfax received first and was the overall junior winner advancing to Springfield for her vocal solo of “Before He Cheats.” Elite Energy of Watseka received second place for a jazz dance and Clara Flott of Dwight was third for a tumbling routine to “This Girl is on Fire.” For the 10 and under division, Leo Matthews of Fairbury was first for his dance to “Billie Jean,” followed by Evie Trachsel of Fairbury in second for gymnastics to music and Adelyn Daimid of Orland Park came in third for ribbon gymnastics.

First place teacher division winner was "Skoolio and Gang" followed by Kirsten Smith in second and Sarah Morris in third.

Show judges included Monica Markley, Dylan Webster and Kalli Verdun. Sponsors were Dr. Charlene and Doug Aaron and Shelley Schahrer was show coordinator.

Heavy rain showers moved in late Friday night lasting into the morning Saturday. Nearly two inches of rain was reported around Fairbury from the initial weather system which already forced the cancellation of Saturday night’s fair night stock car racing.

The Feudin’ Hillbillys and John Michael Montgomery concert was not impacted by weather Friday evening. Saturday morning’s fair 5K run still took place along with livestock shows even though several downpours impacted the area. The kids fun run did not happen afterward due to lightning.

The KCBS Barbeque Cookoff and kids barbeque contest was held and rides were open during the midday hours as the sun came out for a brief time, allowing visitors to stroll through the fairgrounds.

With severe storms and even tornadoes spotted around Eureka mid-afternoon, all rides and activities were suspended at the fair. The Fairbury Fair Facebook page later reported the carnival and all food vendors were canceled for Saturday night with rides and food stands scheduled to open at noon Sunday. The post indicated the fair was still working with all parties involved about the band at the beer stand (as of 5:20 p.m. Saturday).

John Michael Montgomery performing at the 2022 Fairbury Fair.

2023

Kent Casson published a story on his FairburyNews.net website about the 2023 Fairbury Fair.

> You can add Leah Marlene and Sawyer Brown to the growing list of popular musical acts performing at the Fairbury Fair.
>
> Both are set to perform during the 147th fair which runs Aug. 16-20, 2023. Leah Marlene, a Normal native, was a finalist on the popular television show American Idol last season. Opening for her will be local artist Patrick McGreal from Chatsworth.
>
> “Patrick has entertained at the Fairbury Speedway in the past and we gave him the opportunity to open for Leah,” said fair board member Gunner Sullivan.

The show will be opening night of the fair with Leah and Patrick, on Aug. 16. Doors will open at 5 p.m. with the first performance starting at 6:30 p.m. followed by the main show at 8 p.m.

Two days later on Aug. 18, the main grandstand concert act will be country band Sawyer Brown, known for a number of hits in the 1980s and 1990s on country radio. They released 18 studio albums and have charted over 50 times on the Hit Country Songs charts with three number one singles, “Step That Step” from 1985, “Some Girls Do” from 1992 and “Thank God for You” in 1993.

“They’ve been around 40 plus years,” notes Sullivan.

Stone Cold Cowboys, a talented band from the Peoria area, will open for Sawyer Brown. According to Sullivan, they have a large following and social media presence.

The fair board has been impressed with crowds for all three of the previous fair concerts since the Fairbury Fair went back to booking major musical acts. Jo Dee Messina, Diamond Rio and John Michael Montgomery were all hits for fairgoers and they are looking for more of the same from Sawyer Brown and Stone Cold Cowboys.

New in 2023, the Fairbury Fair partnered with Fairbury Speedway to offer free grandstand admission to the races on the Saturday night of the fair which will be Fairbury Speedway's fan appreciation night.

“Spectators will pay just $5 at the gate to get on the fairgrounds then the races will be absolutely free in the grandstands,” added Sullivan.

This is a way to get more people on the grounds for the fair and the races. For concert and 2023 fair updates, visit www.thefairburyfair.com or follow the fair’s page on Facebook.

Sponsors include Compeer Financial for the Leah Marlene show and Brandt Consolidated, Bank of Pontiac and Gibson Area Hospital for Sawyer Brown.

“We are excited these businesses help us put these events on,” said Sullivan.

Grandstand Concerts took care of all the booking of the concerts while the Leon Edwards Marketing Company is doing all marketing and online ticket sales.

2024

Kent Casson wrote a story about the 2024 Fairbury fair.

> Judging of exhibits and plenty of family entertainment are just some of what is planned this week during the 148th annual Fairbury Fair which runs Wednesday through Sunday (Aug. 14-18).
>
> Local bands will be featured opening night on Wednesday during the “We Are One” event at 6:30 in the grandstand.
>
> “We are doing a Christian music concert,” explains one of the Fairbury Fair directors, Gerry Brandt. “It will be free.”
>
> Brandt serves as chairman of the volunteer committee which lines up gate workers during the fair.
>
> Wednesday also includes livestock judging and floral hall exhibits and a DJ in the beer garden from 9 to 11 p.m.
>
> Thursday features the kids day events from 1 to 5 p.m. with a Pinewood Derby at 5:30, golf cart rodeo at 6:30 and a DJ from 8 to 11 p.m. in the beer garden.
>
> Friday is Military Day with the Euchre Tournament getting underway at 1 p.m. and the country concert with Sara Evans featuring Kaylyn Pace starts at 7 p.m. The Stone Cold Cowboys perform in the beer garden from 9:30 p.m. to midnight.
>
> Saturday is the 5K Run and 2 Mile Walk starting at 8 a.m. and the KCBS BBQ Cookoff beginning at 9 a.m. The talent show is at 10:30 a.m., kids baggo tournament at 1 p.m., golf cart scavenger hunt at 2 p.m., stock car racing at 5:15 and the band 80’s Bush from 9:30 to midnight.
>
> Sunday includes the community worship service at 10 a.m., antique farm equipment display from 12 to 3, chili cookoff from 12 to 5, baggo tournament starting at 1, demolition derby at 2 p.m. and the closing events at 5:30.
>
> Conner Family Amusements is providing the rides once again with numerous wristband specials throughout the fair. Wednesday and Thursday will feature a free gate all day while Friday includes a $10 gate starting at 3 p.m., Saturday is the $10 gate beginning at 10 a.m. and Sunday’s $10 gate starts at 10 a.m.

2024 Fair Board. Photo courtesy of Gunner Sullivan. Front left-to-right: Tristen Rieger(AD), Kelly Honegger(P), Connie Haas, Irv Metz, Mary Beth Crews, Julie Honegger(AD), Sarah Breeden. Back row left-to-right: Gerry Brandt, Gunner Sullivan, Eli Stork, Dereck Stephens(AD), Chris Matich(S), Mark Trainor(VP). Not present Matt Curl, Ray Popejoy and Andrew Weber(T).

2025

Kent Casson wrote the following story about the 2025 Fairbury fair.

> They may be gearing up for the big 150th next year – but organizers guarantee an entertaining experience at this year's Fairbury Fair.
>
> Conner Family Amusements will be back on the carnival midway and wood carving returns to the five-day event running this Wednesday through Sunday.
>
> "We are going to have the TaDa robots again," explains Fairbury Fair board member and Legion Commander Gerry Brandt. "The little robots that sit on a tractor and peddle themselves around."
>
> Miller's Petting Zoo is back along with the Fairbury Prairie Farmers 4-H Food Stand, daily activities on the midway and the fair staples such as livestock and exhibits.

“Last year, Floral Hall was pretty packed,” notes Brandt.

The popular Golf Cart Rodeo is Wednesday evening.

“You have teams of two to four people on the cart and they do different things,” explains Fair Board President Mary Beth Crews.

Thursday is Daycare Day with licensed providers bringing kids out in the morning.

Wednesday and Thursday both have free gates all day and Kids Day events take place Thursday afternoon. This includes a chance to see farm equipment and participate in a scavenger hunt.

“We try to make it a learning day for the kids but a fun day,” adds Crews.

The kids pinewood derby also happens Thursday while the local Christian bands perform the “One in Christ” concert at 6:30 p.m. in front of the grandstand.

Friday is Military Day sponsored by the Legion. A Euchre tournament begins at 1 p.m. with music taking center stage in the evening. Local artist Aaron Newsome sings at 7 p.m. followed by the Oak Ridge Boys at 7:30 in the grandstand. The group 80s Bush performs in the beer garden at 9:30.

Saturday includes the 5K run and two-mile walk in the morning along with a golf cart scavenger hunt in the afternoon. The smell of smoke fills the air with the KCBS Barbeque Cookoff throughout the day.

Another favorite returns to the fair this year.

“We are trying to bring back the talent show,” said Crews.

The show will be Saturday at 10:30 a.m. in the beer garden tent.

“It’s not just the Prairie Central School District,” notes Brandt.

The kids baggo tournament and stock car racing round out Saturday’s highlights. The 3 DJ’s reunion is from 7 to 9 p.m. in the beer garden followed by the Stone Cold Cowboys from 9:30 to midnight.

“The stock car racing is free that night,” explained Brandt.

Judging concludes on Sunday and the final day also includes a Makers Market vendor fair, chili cookoff, community worship service and antique farm equipment display.

Kent included this photo from the 2024 Fairbury Fair Golf Cart Rodeo with his article on the 2025 Fairbury Fair.

Fair Office personnel Ronda Stoller and Denise Brown. Photo courtesy of Gunner Sullivan.

2026

2026 Fairbury Fair August 19-23

Welcome Shenandoah and Blackhawk to the 150th fair!

PRE-FAIR EVENTS

Early sale ride **vouchers and tickets** available at local banks & businesses	Mon 6/1
Fair Office opens for in-person availability	Monday 8/10
Entries must be made no later than 5:00 pm in person/11:59 pm online	Friday 8/14

FAIR WEEK EVENTS

On the Midway during the week-Conner Family Amusements, wood carving by Bear Hollow, Rotary & Lion's Club Bingo tent, Miller's Petting Zoo, Face Painting, 4-H Foodstand, Livestock and Home Economics Exhibits, Robot & Magic Show (attractions & times for Midway events vary daily)

Wednesday, August 19--Free Gate All Day

8:00 am	Junior Swine	Show Barn
8:00 am	Culinary Judging	Floral Hall
8:30 am	Dairy Cattle & Jr Dairy Cattle Judging	Cattle Barn
9:00 am	Open Swine Judging	Show Barn
9:00 am	Poultry and Jr Poultry Judging	Poultry Building
9:00 am	Floriculture & Fine Arts Judging	Floral Hall
9:30 am	Fruits and Vegetable Judging	Floral Hall
10:00 am	Textile & Model Judging	Floral Hall
6:00 pm	Conner Family Amusements (wristband hours 6-10 pm)	Midway
6:30 pm	**TNA Rodeo**	Grandstand
9:00-11 pm	Two Smokies and the Bandit Band	Beer Garden

Thursday, August 20--Free Gate All Day

9:00 am	Daycare Day Events for area licensed providers	Midway
1:00 pm	**Kids Day kick off**	Midway
5:00 pm	Registration for Kids Pinewood Derby	East End
5:30 pm	**Kids Pinewood Derby (ages 5-18)**	East End
6:00 pm	Conner Family Amusements (wristband hours 6-10 pm)	Midway
7:00 pm	**Big Daddy Weave**	Grandstand
9:00-11 pm	Off Track IC Unplugged Band	Beer Garden

Friday, August 21--$10 Gate starting at 3 pm

8:00 am	Sheep Judging	Show Barn
9:00 am	Beef Judging followed by Steers	Cattle Barn
12:30 pm	Euchre Tournament Check-in **($5 entry)**	Bingo Tent
1:00 pm	**Euchre Tournament Begins**	Bingo Tent
6:00 pm	Conner Family Amusements (wristband hours 6-10 pm)	Midway
7:00 pm	**Blackhawk**	Grandstand

7:30 pm	**Shenandoah**-advance ticket sales start at $39-$49	Grandstand
9:30-12:00	**Feudin' Hillbillies**	Beer Garden

Saturday, August 22--$10 Gate starting at 10 am
Live various Performance Clown Band

6:45 am	Registration begins for 5K run/2 mile Walk	Main office area
8:00 am	**5K Run/2 mile Walk begins**	3rd street gate
8:00 am	Junior Beef Judging	Cattle Barn
8:00 am	Market Lamb Show followed by Jr. Sheep	Show Barn
8:00am	Tractor Drive	
9:00 am	**KCBS Barbeque Cookoff begins**	West end of grounds
10:00 am	Rabbit Show	Poultry Building
10:30 am	**Talent Show**	Beer Garden tent
11:00-3:00	Zipline	Grandstand
12:00 pm	Conner Family Amusements (2 wristband sessions 12-4 pm and 6-10 pm) (Rides will be shut down from 4-5 for a dinner break)	Midway
12:15 pm	Kids Baggo Tournament check-in	West end
1:00 pm	**Kids BBQ contest begins**	West end of grounds
1:00 pm	**Kids Baggo Tournament begins**	West End
2:00 pm	**Golf Cart Scavenger Hunt Begins**	American Legion
2:00-5:00 pm	Pistol Pack'n Mama's Band	Beer Garden
4:00 pm	BBQ Awards	West End
5:15 pm	**STOCK CAR RACING**	Grandstand
5:00-10:00 pm	**DJ Chris Tull**	**Beer Garden**
10-12:00 pm	Hair Bangers Ball	Beer Garden

Sunday, August 23--$10 Gate starting at 10 am-Military Day
Free gate for active and retired military WITH CREDENTIALS
Live various Performance Clown Band

9:00 am	Dairy Goat & Jr Goat Judging	Show Barn
10:00 am	**Community Worship Service**	Grandstand
11:00-4:30	Sign up for Kids Drawing	Under Grandstand
11:00-3:00	Maker's Market	East end of grounds
12:00 pm	Antique Farm Equipment Display	West end of grounds
11:00-4pm	**Chili Cook Off**	Beer Garden
12:15 pm	Baggo Tournament Check in	Beer Garden
1:00 pm	**Baggo Tournament Begins**	Beer Garden
1:00-4:00	Golden Ember's Band	Beer Garden
12:00-6:00 pm	Conner Family Amusements (wristband hours 1-5 pm)	Midway
1:30 pm	**DEMO DERBY $10.00** - Kids 12 & Under Free	Grandstand
4:00 pm	**Closing Events -Announcement of winners for Kids Drawing, Chili Cookoff**	
	Live auction of wood carvings	Beer Garden

Chapter 19

Famous Performers at the Fairbury Fair

Over the years, many entertainers at the Fairbury Fair were already fairly famous, or would later become relatively famous.

The following list is not complete, but it does give a good idea of who many of the entertainers were at past Fairbury Fairs.

Past Entertainers at the Fairbury Fair

- 1956 Grand Ole Opry Lonzo & Oscar
- 1957 Minnie Pearl & Grand Ole Opry
- 1958 Still Looking For Data
- 1959 Still Looking For Data
- 1960 Duke Of Paducah
- 1961 Still Looking For Data
- 1962 Still Looking For Data
- 1963 Still Looking For Data
- 1964 Still Looking For Data
- 1965 Myron Floren / Jo Ann Castle
- 1966 The Ink Spots
- 1967 Still Looking For Data
- 1968 Frank Sinatra Jr.
- 1969 Brothers & Sisters
- 1970 Don Rice
- 1971 Porter Wagoner & Dolly Parton
- 1972 Bill Anderson & Jan Howard
- 1973 Sonny James Wednesday and Billy "Crash" Craddock Thursday For 2 Shows
- 1974 Bill Anderson
- 1975 Del Reeves, Grandpa Jones, Crystal Gayle
- 1976 Loretta Lynn
- 1977 Conway Twitty
- 1978 Jeannie C Riley/Johnny Russell
- 1979 Sonny James
- 1980 Barbara Mandrell
- 1981 Tom T Hall
- 1982 Louise Mandrell
- 1983 Box Car Willie
- 1984 Atlanta
- 1985 Dave & Sugar
- 1986 The Kendalls & The Harts
- 1987 Atlanta
- 1988 Britt Small & Festival
- 1989 Jerry Reed

- 1990 The Cissie Lynn Show
- 1991 The Mike Snider Show
- 1992 Bill Anderson
- 1993 Sweethearts of the Rodeo
- 1994 Boy Howdy Show
- 1995 Rhett Akins
- 1996 Ty Herndon
- 1997 Trace Adkins
- 1998 James Bonomy Show
- 1999 Gary Allan
- 2000 Ricochet
- 2001 Darryl Worley/Patty Jo Timmons
- 2002 Jeff Carson
- 2003 Four Sisters and A Cousin
- 2004 Still Looking For Data
- 2005 Capt. Rat and The Blind Rivets
- 2008 Kevin Adair – Hypnotist
- 2010 Steve Hall and the Shotgun Red Show
- 2015 The Willis Clan
- 2016 Caroline Kole, Johnny Cash & June Carter Cash Tribute Band
- 2017 The Martin Family
- 2019 JoDee Messina with Kelsey Hickman
- 2020 Fair Canceled Due to COVID 19 Pandemic
- 2021 Diamond Rio with Brushville
- 2022 John Michael Montgomery with Feudin Hillbillys
- 2023 Sawyer Brown with The Stone Cold Cowboys
- 2024 Sara Evans with Kaylyn Pace
- 2025 The Oak Ridge Boys with Aaron Newsome

Chapter 20

Past Fair Board Officers and Directors

The History of the Fairbury Fair Board of Directors

When The Fairbury American Legion John Joda Post 54 bought The Fairbury Fair Corporation in 1936 they set, in The Fair Bylaws, that the corporation would be managed on a day-to-day basis by a 12-member volunteer board of directors who would be elected by and report to the Post Executive Committee. The Post Executive Committee is headed by the Legion Commander and is comprised of the 10 Post Officers. The Directors would serve 3 year terms on a rotating basis. A provision was made for both the Treasurer and Secretary to be either a Director or a Non-Director positions.

All Directors until 1994 were required to be members of the Fairbury Post. With a revision of the Bylaws in 1994 the Post allowed Non-Post members to be elected to the 1995 Board. At this time a revision was also added to make the Post Commander an Ex Officio or "non-elected" Director with all the responsibilities of the elected members except their vote only counts as a tie breaker, as needed, and they cannot hold an office on the board. At this time there has only been 2 Post Commanders who have served as Ex Officio Directors, R. E. Bob Wharton (1995-2007) and Gerry Brandt (2008-2026). A second revision was made in 2009 to allow for the addition of up to 3 Associate Directors serving 1 year terms. In 2018 the latest revision of the Bylaws was made eliminating the 3year term so all Directors are now elected annually.

Accuracy of Historical Lists Shown in this Chapter

The 2026 Fairbury Fair Board researched and compiled the various historical lists shown in this chapter with as much due diligence as possible.

The Fair Board apologizes in advance if we inadvertently missed someone or made errors in the timelines.

Officers and Directors, 1930s

Year	Officers	Directors
1936	Pres.: P.J. Keck; VP: Ed Yeagle; Treas.: K.V. Keck; Sect.: George Decker; A. Sect.: H.W. Meisenhelder	John Wessels, Edward Lange, Matt Lewis, Harry Klopfenstein, L.S. Henderson, H.J. Downs, Glenn Martin, C.E. Wink, W.D. Henning
1937	Pres.: P.J. Keck; VP: Ed Yeagle; Treas.: K.V. Keck; Sect.: George Decker; A. Sect.: H.W. Meisenhelder	John Wessels, Edward Lange, Matt Lewis, Harry Klopfenstein, L.S. Henderson, H.J. Downs, Glenn Martin, C.E. Wink, W.D. Henning
1938	Pres.: P.J. Keck; VP: Ed Yeagle; Treas.: K.V. Keck; Sect.: George Decker; A. Sect.: H.W. Meisenhelder	John Wessels, Edward Lange, Matt Lewis, Harry Klopfenstein, L.S. Henderson, H.J. Downs, Glenn Martin, C.E. Wink, W.D. Henning
1939	Pres.: P.J. Keck; VP: Ed Yeagle; Treas.: K.V. Keck; Sect.: George Decker	John Wessels, Edward Lange, Matt Lewis, Louis Hoffman, M.E. Tarpy, Ed Yeagle, H.J. Downs, H.W. Meisenhelder, C.E. Wink, W.D. Henning

Officers and Directors, 1940s

Year	Officers	Directors
1940	No Records	
1941	No Records	
1942	No Records	
1943	No Records	
1944	No Records	
1945	Pres.: M.E. Tarpy; VP: Ed Lange; Treas.: K.V. Keck; Sect.: George Decker; A. Sect.: Don Kelso	C.E. Wink, E.D. Moser, W.H. Bartlett, C.R. Callaby, E.M. Gerdes, J.M. Wessels, J.W. Hildreth, A.D. Steidinger
1946	No Records	
1947	No Records	
1948	Pres.: Joe Slagel; VP: J.W. Hildreth; Treas.: K.V. Keck; Sect.: Robert Maurer	Carl Rapp, C.R. Callaby, Moyne Humphry, Duane Morris, John Goold, Dean Williams, James Peters, A.D. Steidinger, John Wade, C.E. Wink
1949	Pres.: Joe Slagel; VP: James Peters; Treas.: William Bartlett; Sect.: Robert Maurer	Carl Rapp, C.R. Callaby, Moyne Humphry, Duane Morris, John Goold, Dean Williams, Wm. Weber, John Wade, Eli Schlipf

Officers and Directors, 1950s

Year	Officers	Directors
1950	Pres.: Slagel; VP: Peters; Treas.: Bartlett; Sect.: Maurer	Rapp, Weber, Grover, Peters, Slagel, Williams, Humphry, Goold, Schlipf, John Wade, Bartlett, Walter
1951	Pres.: Slagel; VP: Peters; Treas.: Jim Wade; Sect.: Maurer	Rapp, Goold, Claudon, Walter, Dawson, John Wade, Humphry, Schlipf, Slagel, Williams, Peters
1952	Pres.: Slagel; VP: Peters; Treas.: Jim Wade (Hallock listed in notes); Sect.: Maurer	Rapp, Wade, Goold, Claudon, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Schlipf, Slagel, Williams, Peters
1953	Pres.: Slagel; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Maurer	Rapp, Weber, Wade, Goold, R. Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Frisby, Slagel, Williams, Peters
1954	Pres.: Slagel; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Maurer	Rapp, Weber, Wade, Goold, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Frisby, Slagel, Williams, Peters
1955	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Maurer	Rapp, E. Mies, Simpson, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Frisby, Slagel, Williams, Peters
1956	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Maurer	Rapp, Mies, Wade, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Frisby, S. Craig, Williams, Peters
1957	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Wessels	Rapp, Mies, Wade, Simpson, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Frisby, Craig, Williams, Peters
1958	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Wessels	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Craig, Williams, Peters
1959	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Yoder	Rapp, Mies, Wade, Simpson, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Frisby, Parmele, Williams, Peters

Officers and Directors, 1960s

Year	Officers	Directors
1960	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Yoder	Rapp, Mies, Wade, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Frisby, Parmele, Williams, Peters
1961	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: D. Moore	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Koehl, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Parmele, Williams, Wharton
1962	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: J. Slagel	Rapp, Mies, Wade, Simpson, Dawson, Humphry, Parmele, Williams, Wharton
1963	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: E. Crews	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Wade, Carter, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Parmele, Williams, Wharton
1964	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Crews	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Wade, Carter, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Parmele, Williams, Wharton
1965	Pres.: Wade; VP: Peters; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Crews	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Wade, Carter, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Parmele, Wharton, Atteberry
1966	Pres.: Wade; VP: Williams; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Crews	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Wade, Carter, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Morris, Wharton, Atteberry
1967	Pres.: Wade; VP: Williams; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Wade, Carter, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Morris, Wharton, Atteberry
1968	Pres.: Wade; VP: Williams; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Wade, Carter, Walter, Dawson, Humphry, Morris, Wharton, Atteberry
1969	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Carter, Crews, Dawson, Humphry, Van Antwerp, Wharton, Atteberry

Officers and Directors, 1970s

Year	Officers	Directors
1970	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Crews, Atteberry, Dawson, Humphry, Carter, Williams, Van Antwerp
1971	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Ziller, Crews, Dawson, Humphry, Van Antwerp, Atteberry, Williams
1972	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Ziller, Crews, Dawson, Humphry, Van Antwerp, Atteberry, Williams
1973	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Ziller, Crews, Dawson, Humphry, Van Antwerp, Atteberry, Williams
1974	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Ziller, Crews, Dawson, Humphry, Van Antwerp, Atteberry, Williams
1975	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Ziller, Crews, Dawson, Van Antwerp, Atteberry, Williams, Meister
1976	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Ziller, Crews, Dawson, Van Antwerp, Atteberry, Williams, Meister
1977	Pres.: Morris; VP: Walter; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Rapp, Mies, Simpson, Ziller, Crews, Kirchner, Van Antwerp, Gerber, Meister, Atteberry
1978	Pres.: Walter; VP: Ziller; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Crews, Van Antwerp, Atteberry, Meister, Kirchner, Gerber, Kaisner, Coleman
1979	Pres.: Walter; VP: Ziller; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Kirchner, Van Antwerp, Crews, Meister, Gerber, Coleman, Kaisner, Mowery

Officers and Directors, 1980s

Year	Officers	Directors
1980	Pres.: Walter; VP: Ziller; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Kirchner, T. Mies, Van Antwerp, Crews, Meister, Gerber, Coleman, Kaisner, Mowery
1981	Pres.: Walter; VP: Ziller; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Kirchner, T. Mies, Van Antwerp, Crews, Meister, Gerber, Schahrer, Kaisner, Mowery
1982	Pres.: Walter; VP: Ziller; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Kirchner, T. Mies, Van Antwerp, Crews, Meister, Gerber, Schahrer, Kaisner, Mowery
1983	Pres.: Walter; VP: Ziller; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Kirchner, T. Mies, Van Antwerp, Crews, Meister, Gerber, Schahrer, Kaisner, Mowery
1984	Pres.: A. Walter; VP: Kaisner; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Meister, Kirchner, Gerber, T. Mies, J. Luttrell, Ricketts, Ziller, Crews, Mowery
1985	Pres.: Kaisner; VP: Ziller Jr.; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Luttrell, Kirchner, Crews, T. Mies, Meister, Gerber, Mowery, Ricketts, Gary Walter
1986	Pres.: Kaisner; VP: Ziller Jr.; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Luttrell, Kirchner, Crews, T. Mies, Meister, Gerber, Mowery, Ricketts, Gary Walter
1987	Pres.: D. Kaisner; VP: W. Ziller; Treas.: Hallock; Sect.: Fugate	Simpson, Meister, Kirchner, Gerber, T. Mies, J. Luttrell, Ricketts, Lyle Wessels, Mowery, Gary Walter
1988	Pres.: D. Kaisner; VP: W. Ziller; Treas.: E. Hallock; Sect.: W. Fugate	Simpson, Meister, Kirchner, Gerber, T. Mies, L. Walters, Ricketts, Lyle Wessel, Mowery, Gary Walter
1989	Pres.: Kaisner; VP: Ziller Jr.; Treas.: E. Hallock; Sect.: W. Fugate	Simpson, Meister, Kirchner, Gerber, T. Mies, L. Walters, S. Ricketts, Lyle Wessel, R. Greenwell, G. Walter

Officers and Directors, 1990s

Year	Officers	Directors
1990	Pres.: D. Kaisner; VP: W. Ziller; Treas.:E. Hallock; Sect.: W. Fugate	C. Simpson, T. Mies, L. Walters, R. Greenwell, G. Walter, E. Meister, J. Gerber, S. Ricketts, J. Luttrell
1991	Pres.: D. Kaisner; VP: W. Ziller; Treas.: D. Barnes; Sect.: W. Fugate	C. Simpson, T. Mies, L. Walters, R. Greenwell, G. Walter, D. Gray, E. Meister, J. Gerber, S. Ricketts, J. Luttrell, R. Kirschner
1992	Pres.: D. Kaisner; VP: W. Ziller; Treas.: L. Maley; Sect.: W. Fugate	C. Simpson, E. Meister, T. Mies, J. Gerber, D. Gray, S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, J. Luttrell, W. Kirschner, G. Walter
1993	Pres.: D. Kaisner; VP: W. Ziller; Treas.: L. Maley; Sect.: W. Fugate	C. Simpson, E. Meister, T. Mies, J. Gerber, D. Gray, S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley, G. Walter, R. Kirschner
1994	Pres.: D. Kaisner; VP: W. Ziller; Treas.: L. Maley; Sect.: W. Fugate	C. Simpson, E. Meister, T. Mies, J. Gerber, D. Gray, S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley, L. Runyon, R. Kirschner
1995	Pres.: “Bud” Gerber; VP: Tom Mies; Treas.: L. Maley; Sect.: W. Fugate	C. Simpson, E. Meister, G. Goodwin, “Irv” Metz, D. Gray, S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley, L. Runyon, P. Augsburger
1996	Pres.: “Bud” Gerber; VP: Tom Mies; Treas.: D. Bray; Sect.: W. Fugate	C. Simpson, E. Meister, G. Goodwin, “Irv” Metz, P. Augsburger, S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, L. Runyon, J. Keeley, D. Gray
1997	Pres.: “Bud” Gerber; VP: P. Augsburger; Treas.: L. Maley; Sect.: W. Fugate	K. Jeffries, G. Goodwin, D. Gray, “Irv” Metz, W. Ziller Jr., S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley, L. Runyon
1998	Pres.: “Bud” Gerber; VP: P. Augsburger; Treas.: L. Maley; Sect.: John Hankes	K. Jeffries, L. Runyon, D. Gray, “Irv” Metz, W. Ziller Jr., S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley
1999	Pres.: P. Augsburger; VP: K. Jeffries; Treas.: L. Maley; Sect.: John Hankes	J. Schahrer, J. Meister, D. Gray, “Irv” Metz, W. Ziller Jr., S. Ricketts, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley, L. Runyon, T. Wells

Officers and Directors, 2000s

Year	Officers	Directors
2000	Pres.: P. Augsburger; VP: K. Jeffries; Sec.: S. Schmidgall; Treas.: J. Meister	Richard Barsema, C. Cottrell, D. Gray, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley, “Irv” Metz, J. Schahrer, T. Webster, T. Wells, R. Wharton
2001	Pres.: P. Augsburger; VP: K. Jeffries; Sec.: S. Schmidgall; Treas.: J. Meister	D. Gray, R. Wharton, J. Keeley, C. Cottrell, R. Greenwell, J. Schahrer, S. Shifflet, K. Bazzell, Richard Barsema, T. Webster
2002	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Fair Manager: S. Schmidgall; Treas.: J. Meister	M. Haab, R. Greenwell, J. Keeley, J. Walter, K. Bazzell, D. Aaron, R. Wharton, B. Sikorski, C. Monson
2003	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Fair Manager: J. Walter; Treas.: J. Meister	M. Haab, D. Kerrins, J. Walter, R. Wharton, B. Sikorski, C. Monson, J. Gillespie
2004	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Fair Manager: J. Walter; Treas.: J. Meister	Greg Myers, Darren Kerrins, Jay Walter, Sherrie Schmidtgall, Rick Dawson, Robert Wharton, Craig Monson, Sally Goembel, James Gillespie
2005	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Treas.: B. Webster	Greg Myers, Jay Walter, Rick Dawson, Sherri Schmidtgall, Darren Kerrins, Robert Wharton, Sally Goembel, Craig Monson, James Gillespie, Lee Kintner
2006	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Sec.: C. Monson	Jay Walter, Rick Dawson, Robert Wharton, Lee Kintner, Sally Goembel, Greg Myers, Sherri Schmidtgall
2007	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Sec.: C. Monson	Greg Myers, Rick Dawson, Robert Wharton, Lee Kintner, Darren Kerrins, Jay Walter, Sally Goembel, Chad Bauman, Sherri Schmidtgall
2008	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Sec.: C. Monson	Greg Myers, Jay Walter, Lee Kintner, Robert Wharton, Rick Dawson, Chad Bauman, Darren Kerrins, Sherri Schmidtgall, Sally Goembel
2009	Pres.: J. Schahrer; VP: T. Webster; Sec.: C. Monson	Greg Myers, Jay Walter, Lee Kintner, Chad Bauman, Rick Dawson, Darren Kerrins, Sally Goembel, Robert Wharton, Sherri Schmidtgall; Associate Directors: Cliff Rosenberger, Kevin Schultz, Frank Fuller

2010 to 2026 List of All Fairbury Fair Directors

The 2026 Fairbury Fair Board researched and constructed a list of all Directors of the Fairbury Fair from 2010 to 2026. This list is shown below:

Year	Officers	Directors
2010	Pres – J. Schahrer VP – T. Webster Sec – C. Monson Treas – J. Walter	R. Wharton, K. Schultz, R. Dawson, C. Bauman, S. Goembel, S. Schmidgall, C. Rosenberger, F. Fuller (AD), G. Brandt
2011	Pres – J. Schahrer VP – T. Webster Sec – C. Monson Treas – J. Walter	R. Wharton, K. Schultz, R. Dawson, C. Bauman, S. Goembel, S. Schmidgall, C. Rosenberger, F. Fuller (AD), G. Brandt
2012	Pres – J. Schahrer VP – C. Monson Sec – S. Schmidgall	R. Wharton, K. Schultz, R. Dawson, D. Kerrins, S. Goembel, J. Cliffe, C. Rosenberger, C. Bauman, F. Fuller (AD), G. Brandt
2013	Pres – L. Rodriquez VP – C. Monson Sec – S. Goembel	R. Wharton, K. Schultz, K. Shiflett, C. Bauman, C. Tribley, J. Cliffe, C. Rosenberger, F. Fuller, M. Trainor
2014	Pres – L. Rodriquez VP – C. Monson Sec – S. Goembel	R. Wharton, F. Fuller, K. Shiflett, J. Cliffe, C. Tribley, D. Kerrins, C. Rosenberger, M. Trainor, G. Brandt
2015	Pres – L. Rodriquez VP – S. Goembel Sec – K. Petersen	R. Wharton, C. Monson, K. Shiflett, D. Kerrins, C. Tribley, C. Rosenberger, M. Trainor, J. Ray (AD), B. Dunn (AD), G. Brandt
2016	Pres – L. Rodriquez VP – S. Goembel Sec – K. Petersen	R. Wharton, C. Monson, K. Shiflett, D. Kerrins, C. Tribley, C. Rosenberger, M. Trainor, J. Ray (AD), B. Dunn (AD), G. Brandt
2017	Pres – L. Rodriquez VP – S. Goembel Sec – K. Petersen	R. Wharton, C. Monson, K. Shiflett, D. Kerrins, C. Tribley, C. Rosenberger, D. Shepherd, M. Trainor, J. Ray (AD), B. Dunn (AD), G. Brandt
2018	Pres – L. Rodriquez VP – S. Goembel Sec – K. Petersen	R. Wharton, C. Monson, K. Shiflett, D. Kerrins, C. Tribley, C. Rosenberger, D. Shepherd, M. Trainor, J. Ray (AD), B. Dunn (AD), G. Brandt
2019	Pres – J. Sullivan VP – K. Honegger Sec – C. Matich Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, S. Ricketts, M. Curl, M.B. Crews, T. Bunch, P. Oldfather, G. Brandt
2020	Pres – J. Sullivan VP – K. Honegger Sec – C. Matich Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, S. Ricketts, M. Curl, M.B. Crews, T. Bunch, P. Oldfather, M. Vaughan, G. Brandt

Year	Officers	Directors
2021	Pres – J. Sullivan VP – K. Honegger Sec – C. Matich Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, S. Ricketts, M. Curl, M.B. Crews, T. Bunch, P. Oldfather, M. Vaughan, G. Brandt
2022	Pres – J. Sullivan VP – K. Honegger Sec – C. Matich Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, S. Ricketts, M. Curl, M.B. Crews, E. Stork, P. Oldfather, J. Ray, M. Trainor (AD), T. Tull (AD), C. Haas, J. Honegger (AD), G. Brandt
2023	Pres – K. Honegger VP – M. Trainor Sec – C. Matich Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, S. Ricketts, M. Curl, M.B. Crews, E. Stork, P. Oldfather, J. Ray, J. Sullivan, T. Tull (AD), M. Honegger (AD), G. Brandt
2024	Pres – K. Honegger VP – M. Trainor Sec – C. Matich Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, J. Sullivan, M. Curl, M.B. Crews, E. Stork, R. Popejoy, C. Haas, S. Breeden, J. Honegger (AD), D. Stephens (AD), T. Rieger (AD), G. Brandt
2025	Pres – M.B. Crews VP – M. Trainor Sec – S. Breeden Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, J. Sullivan, M. Curl, E. Ricketts, E. Stork, R. Popejoy, C. Haas, C. Matich, D. Stephens (AD), N. Wenger (AD), G. Brandt
2026	Pres – M.B. Crews VP – M. Trainor Sec – K. Arbogast Treas – A. Weber	I. Metz, J. Sullivan, M. Curl, E. Ricketts, E. Stork, R. Popejoy, C. Haas, C. Matich, H. Earney (AD), D. Stephens (AD), N. Wenger (AD), G. Brandt

Years of Service as Fair Board Officers or Directors

Using a blend of preserved records and newly completed research, the 2026 Fair Board assembled a comprehensive list of all Fair Board Officers and Directors who served between 1950 and 2026.

The list records the years of service for each individual and highlights the remarkable dedication of those who guided the Fair over the decades. Altogether, these individuals provided **977 combined years of service** to the Fairbury Fair.

Fairbury Fair Board Directors 1950-2026

Name	Positions Held	Total Years
Doug Aaron	Dir 1 yr	1 yr
Kathy Arbogast	Sec 1yr	1 yr
Richard Attebury	Dir 14 yrs	14 yrs
Paul Augsbuger	Pres 3 yrs, VP 2 yrs, Dir 1 yr	6 yrs
Don Barnes	Treas 1 yr	1 yr
Richard Barsema	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Chad Bauman	Dir 4 yrs	4 yrs
Kyle Bazzell	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Gerry Brandt	Ex/O Dir 19 yrs	19 yrs
Darren Bray	Treas 1 yr	1 yr
Sarah Breeden	Sec 1 yr, Dir 1 yr	2 yrs
Tracy Bunch	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Royce Carter	Dir 8 yrs	8 yrs
Joe Cliffe	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Keith Coleman	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Cory Cottrell	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Sterling Craig	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Everett Crews	Sec 4 yrs, Dir 18 yrs	22 yrs
Mary Beth Crews	Pres 2 yrs, Dir 6 yrs	8 yrs
Matt Curl	Dir 8 yrs	8 yrs
Rick Dawson	Dir 7 yrs	7 yrs
Bill Dawson	Dir 26 yrs	26 yrs
Brian Dunn	A Dir 4 yrs	4 yrs
Haley Earney	A Dir 1 yr	1 yr
Bill Frisby	Dir 7 yrs	7 yrs
Bill Fugate	Sec 31 yrs	31 yrs

Name	Positions Held	Total Years
Frank Fuller	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
J. Bud Gerber, Jr	Pres 4 yrs, Dir 17 yrs	21 yrs
Jim Gillespie	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Sally Goembel	VP 4 yrs, Sec 2 yr, Dir 9 yrs	15 yrs
George Goodwin	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
John Goold	Dir 5 yrs	5 yrs
Don Gray	Dir 11 yrs	11 yrs
Ray Greenwell	Dir 14 yrs	14 yrs
Ray Grover	Dir 1 yr	1 yr
Mark Haab	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Connie Haas	Dir 4 yrs	4 yrs
Elmer Hallock	Treas 39 yrs	39 yrs
John Hankes	Sec 2 yrs	2 yrs
Julie Honegger	A Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Kelly Honegger	Pres 2 yrs, VP 4 yrs	6 yrs
Megan Honegger Nabors	A Dir 1yr	1 yr
Moyne Humphrey	Dir 25 yrs	25 yrs
Keith Jeffries	VP 3 yrs, Dir 1 yr	4 yrs
Dennis Kaisner	Pres 10 yrs, VP 1 yr, Dir 7 yrs	18 yrs
Joe Keeley	Dir 9 yrs	9 yrs
Darren Kerrins	Dir 8 yrs	8 yrs
Lee Kintner	Dir 5 yrs	5 yrs
Dick Koehl	Dir 9 yrs	9 yrs
Dick Kirchner	Dir 13 yrs	13 yrs
John Luttrell	Dir 8 yrs	8 yrs
Lori Maley	Treas 7 yrs	7 yrs
Chris Matich	Sec 6 yrs, Dir 2 yrs	8 yrs
Robert Maurer	Sec 7 yrs	7 yrs
Everett Meister	Dir 21 yrs	21 yrs
Jone Meister	Treas 7 yrs, Dir 1 yr	8 yrs
J. Irv Metz	Dir 14 yrs	14 yrs
Ernie Mies	Dir 23 yrs	23 yrs
Tom Mies	VP 2 yrs, Dir 16 yrs	18 yrs
Craig Monson	VP 3 yrs, Sec 6 yrs, Dir 8 yrs	17 yrs
D. Moore	Sec 1 yr	1 yr

Name	Positions Held	Total Years
Duane Morris	Pres 9 yrs, Dir 3 yrs	12 yrs
Russel Mowery	Dir 11 yrs	11 yrs
Greg Myers	Dir 5 yrs	5 yrs
Penny Oldfather	Dir 4 yrs	4 yrs
Dave Parmele	Dir 7 yrs	7 yrs
James Peters	VP 15 yrs	15 yrs
Kimberly Petersen	Sec 4 yrs	4 yrs
Ray Popejoy	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Carl Rapp	Dir 28 yrs	28 yrs
Jeremy Ray	Assoc Dir 4 yrs, Dir 2 yrs	6 yrs
F. Bub Ricketts	Dir 4 yrs	4 yrs
Eddie Ricketts	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Steve Ricketts	Dir 16 yrs	16 yrs
Tristen Rieger	A Dir 1 yr	1 yr
Leroy Rodriguez	Pres 5 yrs, Dir 3 yrs	8 yrs
Cliff Rosenberger	A Dir 1 yr, Dir 9 yrs	10 yrs
Lloyd Runyon	Dir 6 yrs	6 yrs
Chuck Schahrer	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Jim Schahrer	Pres 12 yrs, Dir 3 yrs	15 yrs
E. Spud Schlipf	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Sherri Schmidgall	Dir 13 yrs	13 yrs
Kevin Schultz	A Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Dave Shepherd	A Dir 2 yrs, Dir 2 yrs	4 yrs
Kay Shifflet	Dir 6 yrs	6 yrs
Sharon Shifflet	Dir 1 yr	1 yr
Robert Sikorski	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Clarence Simpson	Dir 42 yrs	42 yrs
Joe Slagel	Pres 5 yrs, Sec 1 yr, Dir 1 yr	7 yrs
Derrek Stephens	A Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Eli Stork	Dir 5 yrs	5 yrs
J. Gunner Sullivan	Pres 4 yrs, Dir 4 yrs	8 yrs
Mark Trainor	A Dir 1 yr, VP 4 yrs, Dir 6 yrs	11 yrs
Chris Tribley	Dir 6 yrs	6 yrs
Taylor Tull	A Dir 1 yr, Dir 1yr	2 yrs
A. Bill Van Antwerp	Dir 15 yrs	15
Macy Vaughan	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs

Name	Positions Held	Total Years
John Wade	Pres 14 yrs, Dir 5 yrs	19 yrs
Jim Wade	Treas 2 yrs	2 yrs
Art Walter	Pres 7 yrs, VP 9 yrs, Dir 20 yrs	36 yrs
Gary Walter	Dir 7 yrs	7 yrs
Jay Walter	Dir 9 yrs	9 yrs
Louis Walters	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Andrew Weber	Treas 8 yrs	8 yrs
Bill Weber	Dir 3 yrs	3 yrs
Todd Webster	VP 10 yrs, Dir 2 yrs	12 yrs
Terri Wells	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Nathan Wenger	A Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
Warren Wessels	Sec 2 yrs	2 yrs
Lyle Wessels	Dir 2 yrs	2 yrs
R. E. Bob Wharton	Ex/O Dir 12yrs, Dir 9 yrs	21 yrs
R. V. Bob Wharton	Dir 19 yrs	19 yrs
Dean Williams	VP 4 yrs, Dir 22 yrs	26 yrs
Cliff Yoder	Sec 2 yrs	2 yrs
Cody Zapp	A Dir 1 yr	1 yr
Wayne Ziller, Jr	VP 16 yrs, Dir 11 yrs	27 yrs

**Note: “Ex Officio” Directors are Legion Commanders appointed to the Board of Directors.

Special Thanks to Past Directors of the Fairbury Fair

The 2026 Fair Board extends its heartfelt thanks to all past Directors of the Fairbury Fair. Their dedication and leadership have been the key ingredients in keeping the Fairbury Fair strong and successful for 150 years.

Fun Fact: As of 2026, there are 52 past and present Directors of the Fairbury Fair still alive.

Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

Photographs from the 1990s

Chapter 21

2026 Fair Board

2026 Fairbury Fair Board. Front row left-to-right: Nathan Wenger, Irv Metz, Connie Haas, Mary Beth Crews - President, Mark Trainor - Vice President, Kathy Arbogast - Secretary, Haley Earney. Back row left-to-right, Matt Curl, Elijah Stork, Ray Popejoy, Eddie Ricketts, Chris Matich, Gunner Sullivan, Derek Stephens, Gerry Brandt.
Missing from the photo: Andrew Weber - Treasurer.

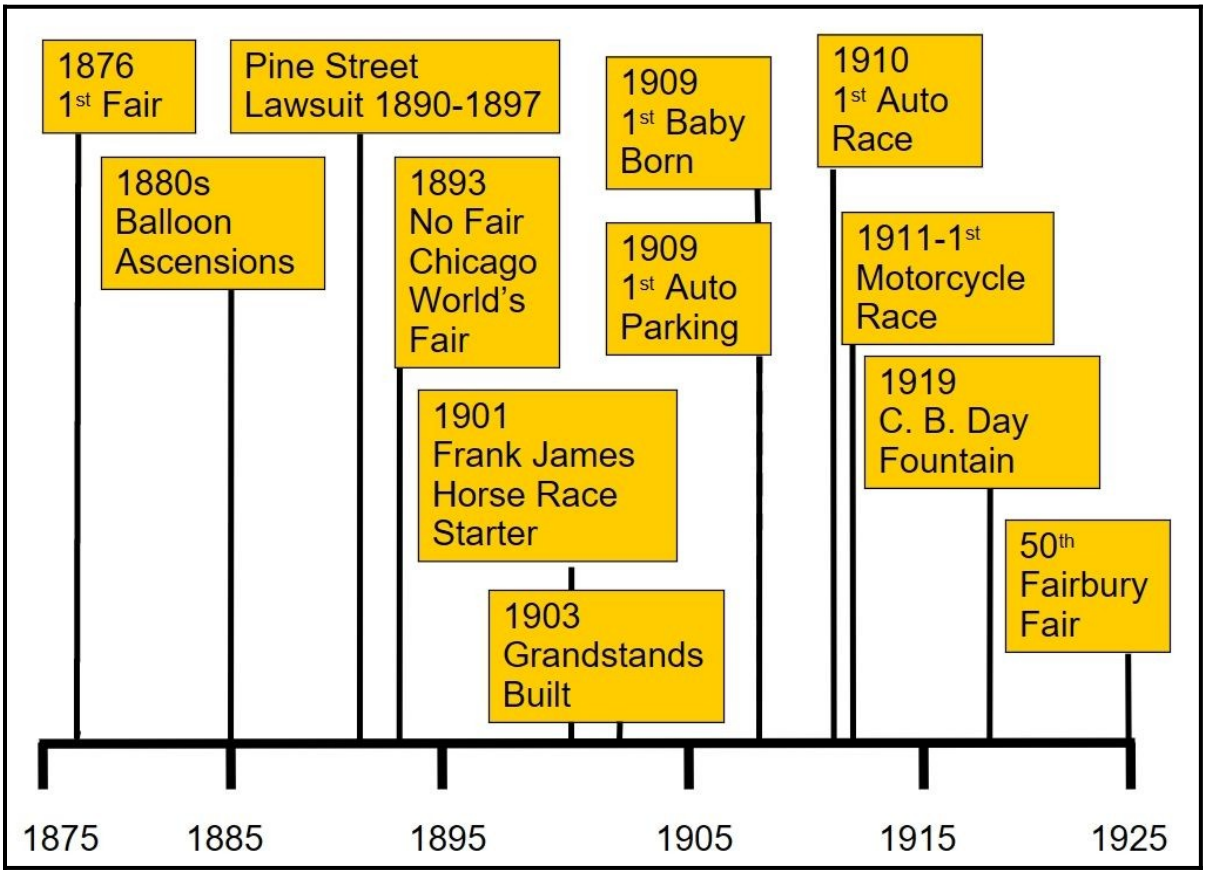
Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

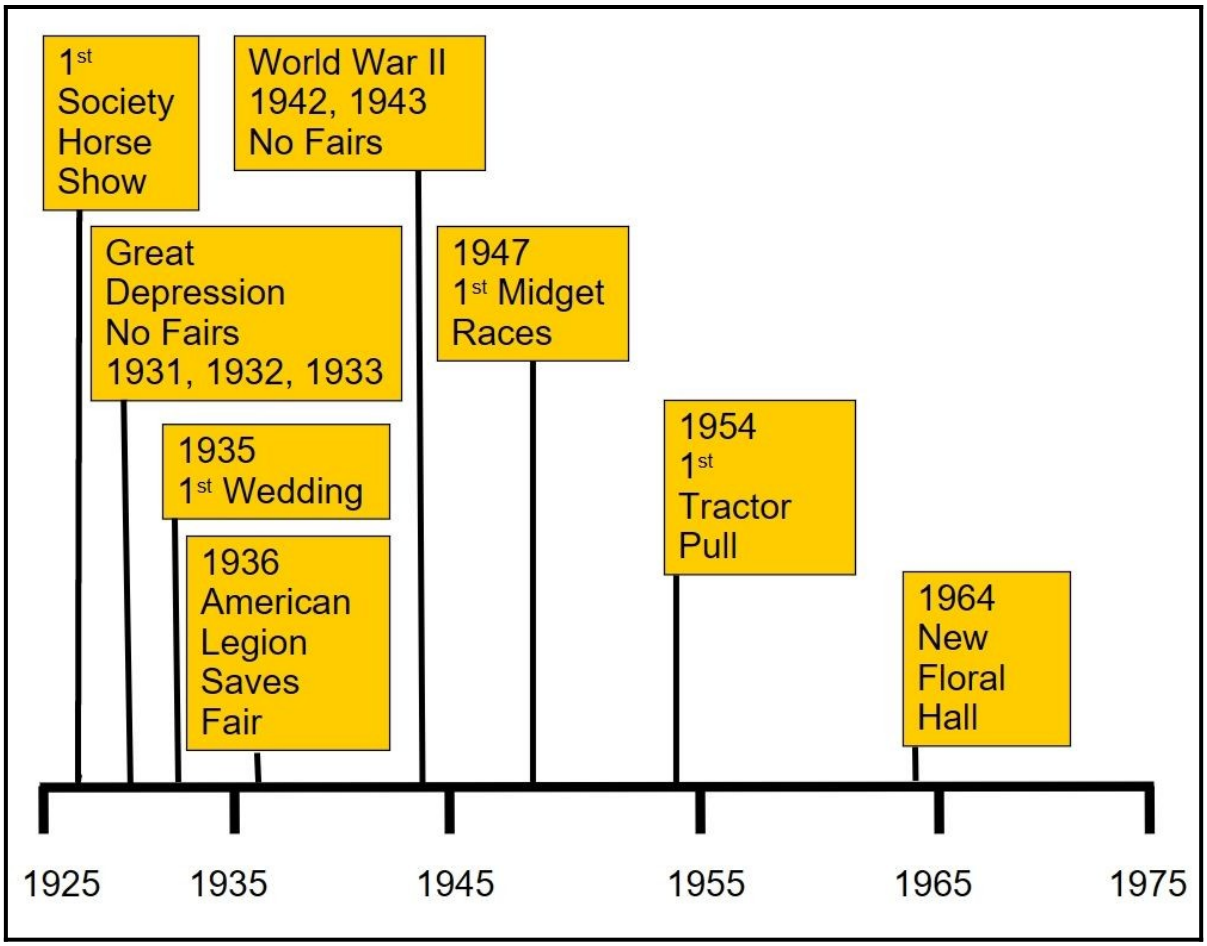
Photographs from the 1990s

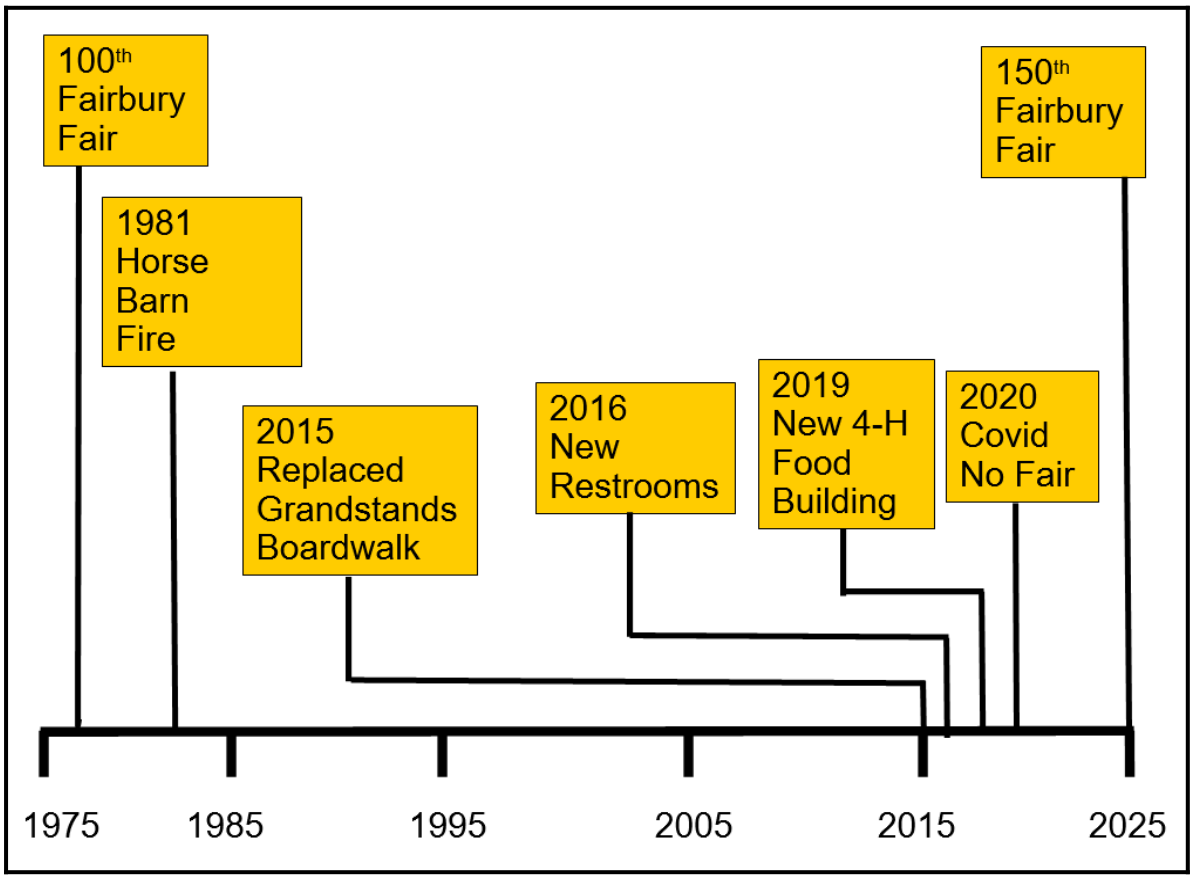
Chapter 22

Fairbury Fair Timeline

A horizontal timeline covering the 150 years of the Fairbury fair would not display very well in this book that has 8.5 inch wide pages. Therefore, the 150 years has been split into three timelines. Each timeline covers a 50 year period of the Fairbury fair.




1st Society Horse Show
World War II 1942, 1943 No Fairs
Great Depression No Fairs 1931, 1932, 1933
1947 1st Midget Races
1935 1st Wedding
1936 American Legion Saves Fair
1954 1st Tractor Pull
1964 New Floral Hall
1925
1935
1945
1955
1965
1975


100th Fairbury Fair
1981 Horse Barn Fire
2015 Replaced Grandstands Boardwalk
2016 New Restrooms
2019 New 4-H Food Building
2020 Covid No Fair
150th Fairbury Fair
1975
1985
1995
2005
2015
2025

Scenes from the Fair – Modern Era

Photographs from the 1990s

Chapter 23

Closing Thoughts

It is remarkable that any volunteer civic organization can endure for 150 years. The Fairbury Fair has done so because of generations of loyal volunteers who have planned and carried out the fair year after year. Over its history, well over 1,000 Fairbury area citizens have given their time and energy to keep the fair going.

The Fairbury Fair has also had to adapt to changing technology. It began in an era when travel was by horse and train. It is hard to imagine crowds of 7,000 to 10,000 people coming to Fairbury in those early years by wagon and railroad car.

The best available records indicate that the grandstand was built in 1903. Considering the ever-present risk of fire and lightning, it is astonishing that this wooden structure has stood for more than 120 years.

The Fairbury Fair has survived World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and the COVID pandemic.

In 1880, Fairbury's population was about 2,000 people. By 2025, it had grown to roughly 3,800. For a relatively small town, Fairbury has produced an outstanding fair each year for a century and a half.

With the continued dedication of future volunteers, the spirit of the Fairbury Fair will endure for many years to come and will continue to create lasting memories for Fairbury area families.

References

All references used in this story were identified at the point they were used in the story.

Recommended Reading

Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars by Alma Lewis James

Fairbury American Legion Speedway: 1922 Indy Type Big Cars to Present Day Super Late Models and All In Between by James A. Whittington.

Websites

Most of the rare documents found in doing research for this book were uploaded to Archive.Org. One can search that website using the search term “Fairbury Fair” + Illinois” to find these documents. All documents may be viewed or downloaded from this website.

Author Spotlight

Dale C. Maley

One of Dale's hobbies is history, including the history of Fairbury, Illinois. Dale has written over 28 books on Fairbury and Livingston County history. He has also written over 350 history stories for the Fairbury Blade newspaper and FairburyNews.Net. He has given many history lectures to various community groups in Livingston, McLean, and Ford Counties. Dale is President of the Livingston County Historical Society and is President of the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Both Dale and his wife are 5th generation citizens of Fairbury.